

THE BOOKS THAT CHANGED MY LIFE

Our critics' choice
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AFTER THE AFFAIR

Who keeps the diamonds?

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Don't blow the whistle on the fat boys

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BEST FOR JOBS WANTED

| | |
|-----------|-----|
| Manager | 55K |
| Analyst | 60K |
| Secretary | 49K |
| Marketing | 80K |

14-PAGE SPECIAL SECTION

Robinson was accused of breaching exchange control rules

By DOMINIC KENNEDY

GEORGEY ROBINSON faced fresh embarrassment over his personal finances last night when it was disclosed that he was reported to the Bank of England in 1980 on suspicion of breaching exchange control regulations.

Sir Michael, a warder, then chairman of BL, is understood to have expressed concerns that Mr Robinson may have moved tens of thousands of pounds of personal money between Britain, Italy and Switzerland, when such movements were prohibited by James

Callaghan's Labour Government. By the time Sir Michael raised the issue with Sir Kit McMahon, then Deputy Governor of the Bank, however, the Conservatives had returned to power under Margaret Thatcher and abolished the exchange controls. The Bank declined to take the matter further.

Mr Robinson, who as Paymaster General is now under fire over a multimillion pound offshore trust, joined British Leyland as financial controller in 1971, moving to Italy the following year as head of Innocenti, the company's Italian arm. He went on to run Jaguar for

two years before becoming Labour MP for Coventry in 1976.

When Sir Michael took over as BL chairman in 1977 and inherited Mr Robinson's three-inch thick personnel file, he found it contained a small section dealing with movements of money. Sir Michael was concerned that Leyland could be regarded as a party to any wrongdoing if it knew of allegations without reporting to the authorities and in 1979 he requested a meeting with the Bank.

Arthur Large, who became BL company secretary in 1979 and accompanied Sir Michael to

Threadneedle Street, said: "I have a fairly good recollection of it. To me it was quite an outing. The chairman and I had set up a meeting with Kit McMahon. It was in connection with a possible contravention of exchange control regulations. There had been some movement of funds. We shared with the Deputy Governor the information that we had."

Under the exchange controls, Britons were allowed to take only small amounts of sterling outside the UK and to invest abroad incurred punitive exchange rates. British expatriates were entitled to

be paid abroad, but had to spend their earnings in that country or return it to Britain; they were not allowed to transfer it to a third country. Mr Robinson, who lived in Italy at the time, was thought to have moved money between Italy, Britain and Switzerland.

Mr Large said the meeting had concerned only Mr Robinson and the three had discussed whether the Bank would take any action. "My recollection is that they declined to do so. They were at that stage unwilling to take it further for whatever reason."

Sir Michael also confirmed yes-

terday that he and Mr Large had visited the Bank. "The meeting was arranged at my request, some months after exchange control was abolished. Matters discussed were as confidential then and, as far as I am concerned, remain so."

At the time of the meeting, Mr Robinson had become something of a thorn in Sir Michael's side and recalling the dismissal of the convenor Derek "Red Robbo" Robinson in his 1982 autobiography, *Back from the Brink*, Sir Michael wrote: "There was far less heat being generated internally than by non-BL people... like Geoffrey

Robinson MP... and one or two others who felt that the whole union system was at risk."

The latest disclosure about the Paymaster General came as the Prime Minister again rejected Tory demands that the minister resign over his personal financial arrangements.

William Hague led a concerted attack on Mr Robinson, saying there was a conflict of interest between his offshore financial interests and his duties as a Treasury minister.

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Diary, page 20

Blair stands firm on plan for welfare

By PHILIP WEBSTER AND JILL SHERMAN

TONY BLAIR told Labour MPs yesterday that internal revolts and fear of unpopularity would not deflect him from reforming the welfare state.

He warned those upset by the cut in benefits for single mothers that there would be still harder decisions to come, and he attacked MPs who handed propaganda gifts to the Tories.

"I always said that education and welfare reform would be the big projects of this government. On education we are delivering. On welfare reform we must deliver, too. There is no backing down. It is essential," he said. And he added: "What we did last week will not be the hardest issue we face in this Parliament."

But the wounds of the rebellion — when 47 Labour MPs voted against the Government — were again laid bare when Clive Soley, chairman of the Parliamentary Labour Party, criticised the Government's handling of the change saying that it "made the whole policy look just like another Thatcherite cut". The Government's honeymoon had finally ended with the revolt, he wrote in an article for the *New Statesman*.

He has since been discussing with Mr Blair ways of improving consultation with MPs so that their views are taken on board before sensitive decisions are made.

In his address to the PLP yesterday morning, the Prime Minister implicitly accepted that future changes would have to be better handled if he were to win support, and he took a conciliatory line towards some of his critics, saying there was room in any party for "criticism, conscience and dissent".

For their part, MPs raised

their concerns over the cuts and pleaded not to have to go through the same agony again. Tony Benn led calls for the Government to think twice before cutting benefits for disabled people.

The Prime Minister's soothing tone did not, however, detract from his central message — that his determination to shake up the welfare state is uncompromising.

He would always listen to people, but governments had to govern. "It is about choices and some of those choices are indeed tough choices to make. But they have to be made. Opposition MPs can always say Yes or Maybe at the very least. In government you have to learn sometimes to say No. Opposition MPs can blame everything on the Government. Government MPs must explain what the Government is doing and why."

Mr Blair added: "I will listen to criticism. I have listened carefully to criticism in recent days. There has to be room in any party for criticism, for conscience, dissent. 'Constructive' criticism is one thing. But it should never be made in such a way that it merely provides gifts to our political enemies, or repeats their propaganda about broken promises, when we have broken none, or accuses us of

dismantling the welfare state when it is this party that built the welfare state and this Government that will save the welfare state."

In his *New Statesman* article, however, Mr Soley wrote that the strategy had to be developed more coherently: "The problem for Labour is how to create a new welfare state without exorbitant costs or the unacceptable pain of cuts to vulnerable groups such as lone parents."

The Government should be warned by Margaret Thatcher's experience when she took on state industries during her first term of office. "It was a harsh way to achieve a positive goal and we must not make the same mistake with the social security system," he said.

Today Harriet Harman will face demands from Lord Ashley and members of the all-party disability group to call a halt to any cuts for the disabled. But Ms Harman is expected to discuss plans to get more people off incapacity benefit and back to work.

The numbers of long-term sick claiming benefit have soared to two million, in spite of more rigorous medical checks and Ms Harman is said to be determined to ensure that only those who need the benefit claim it.

Ardour for Labour starting to cool

By PETER RIDDELL

PUBLIC satisfaction with Tony Blair and his Government has dropped sharply over the past month, but people still prefer Labour over the Tories by a huge margin, according to the latest MORI poll for *The Times*.

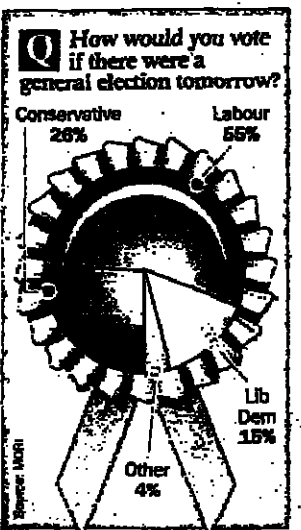
The poll, undertaken last weekend, shows that the recent rows over single parent benefits, beef and the financial affairs of Geoffrey Robinson, the Paymaster General, have taken some of the shine off Labour's post-election gloss.

This increase in public dissatisfaction has, however, been of little help to the Opposition since, faced with a choice of parties, people still back Labour over the Tories by a two-to-one margin.

The Labour lead remains at near record levels for this period after an election. Labour is now on 55 per cent, down just one point since late November, with the Tories two points up at 26 per cent. The Liberal Democrats are one point down at 15 per cent.

This tiny narrowing in the Labour lead, from 32 to 29 points, has occurred despite a big drop in the Government's approval rating. The index measuring those satisfied minus those dissatisfied with the way the Government is running the country has dropped from plus 24 points to just plus five points. Similarly, Mr

Blair's approval ratings have fallen from their previous sky-high levels. His net rating, satisfied minus dissatisfied, has dropped from plus 50 to plus 34 points over the past three weeks. His net rating is now plus 73 points, a record for any new Prime Minister. MORI interviewed a representative quota sample of 2,122 adults at 169 sampling points across Britain on December 12 to 15. Data were weighted to match the profile of the population. Voting intention figures exclude those who would not vote (9 per cent), were undecided (4 per cent) or refused to say (1 per cent).



A David Banks cartoon depicting the infamous baseball cap is the Shadow Cabinet's wedding gift to William Hague

Strippers ambush Hague at party

By ANDREW PIERCE
POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

WILLIAM HAGUE'S triumphant arrival for his pre-wedding celebrations was embarrassingly delayed last night when three strippers accosted him on the doorstep of the Conservative Carlton Club.

The Tory leader made a panic getaway as camera bulbs went off when the three stied their fur coats and mace to expose themselves to him and his fiancée. The three women had been put up to the stunt by a cable television company.

Mr Hague pushed one of them aside as she tried to kiss him, causing her to stumble on the slippery pavement in London's St James's, and then raced for his chauffeur-driven car to escape photographers.

With a shaken Pion Jenkins by his side and a puzzled party chairman Lord Parkinson waiting in the foyer to greet them, the couple were driven round The Mall to give them time to regain their poise.

The three women — one a blonde, one brunette and one black — had lain in wait for the unsuspecting couple for almost an hour as leading

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IRA bombers are allowed home for Christmas

By MARTIN FLETCHER, CHIEF IRELAND CORRESPONDENT

THREE top IRA bombers, each a high-risk prisoner serving multiple life sentences at the Maze prison outside Belfast, are for the first time being allowed home for Christmas and the New Year to the dismay of their victims' relatives.

Patrick Magee, who planted the Brighton bomb that nearly killed Margaret Thatcher and her Cabinet in 1984, has just been granted ten days' leave beginning next Tuesday.

Magee, 46, was branded "a man of exceptional cruelty and inhumanity" by the Old Bailey judge who in 1986 gave him eight life sentences with a recommended minimum of 35 years.

Also being allowed home are Paul Kavanagh and Thomas Quigley, both 41, who conducted a month-long London terror campaign in 1981 including the Chelsea barracks bomb that killed two passers-by and injured many Irish Guards, a booby-trapped bomb in an Oxford Street Wimpy bar that killed a bomb-disposal expert and the bombing of the Wimbledon house of Sir Michael Havers, then the Attorney General.

"You showed not a spark of compassion," said another Old Bailey judge as he gave the pair five life sentences each in 1985.

The three men are the most infamous of the 160 republican and loyalist paramilitary prisoners — more than a third of the Maze's population — who have qualified for the Northern Ireland Prison Service's unique Christmas leave

scheme this year. Sir Donald MacLean, whose wife Muriel died in the Brighton bomb, said the men had chosen terrorism, were among the worst of the criminal fraternity and deserved no leniency.

"They are getting the concession of enjoying Christmas with their families but my wife has not been given that chance. My family has not been given the chance of seeing their mother, and their children have been denied the chance of knowing their grandfather," he said.

Andrew MacKay, the Shadow Northern Ireland Secretary, said he was "frankly surprised that such hardened terrorists with appalling records and life sentences are being allowed home for Christmas. The public will find it difficult to understand how people with their track record should be allowed a Christmas with their families denied to their innocent victims."

Ken Maginnis, the Ulster Unionist Party's security spokesman, said it was "unseemly that the leadership and top activists of the IRA are subject to exactly the same criteria as the lesser criminals of the terrorist fraternity."

The prison service argues that its home leave schemes help inmates maintain family links and so reduce the chances of them re-offending when eventually released. Adam Ingram, Northern Ireland security minister, said no prisoner was allowed home without a "rigorous risk assessment".



Warning to GPs about chicken flu

Doctors in Britain have been asked to look out for cases of chicken flu, the new form of the disease which has already killed two people in Hong Kong.

The Chief Medical Officer, Sir Kenneth Calman, has written to all GPs about the virus, which is called H5N1 and was previously confined to birds.

Winnie pulls out of ANC contest

Winnie Madikizela-Mandela withdrew from the race for the deputy presidency of the African National Congress.

There was wild cheering at the party's fiftieth national conference, in Mafeking, when she made the announcement after keeping delegates in suspense for as long as possible.

United v Monaco

Manchester United will play Monaco in the European Cup quarter-finals. The first leg will be in the Principality on March 4.



MCC opens the door for election of women members

After 200 years, fair play wins the day at the world's most renowned cricket club, write Ivo Tennant and Damian Whitworth



The club was founded in 1787

AFTER more than two centuries of excluding women, the committee of MCC has decided that such behaviour is just not cricket.

The most renowned cricket club in the world has long had a reputation for fair play both on and off the field. Only in the way it has turned down the appeals of female players and spectators to join the club has it been accused by some of being unsporting. Now by a large majority, the committee has recommended that women become eligible for election as members.

Current members will be able to vote at a special general meeting at Lord's on February 24.

The issue has been a vexed one for several years. The committee, which includes distinguished former cricketers in Ted Dexter and Tony Lewis, as well as other prominent individuals such as Lord Alexander of Weedon and Sir Tim Rice, admitted yesterday that it was concerned at being regarded in some quarters as "an old-fashioned male preserve".

When the Marylebone Cricket

Club was founded in 1787, the election of female members was not countenanced. The rules did not explicitly exclude women, other than not allowing them into the pavilion, but the regulations were drawn up on the assumption that it was a gentlemen's club. A two-thirds majority of members who vote in February will be required to overturn this.

MCC's committee believes that if women are to become eligible for election, there should no longer be any reason to ban them from the

Long Room, although there will be practical considerations to take into account. It is likely that a ladies playing section would be created, as is the case in other sports clubs.

In a letter sent to the 17,500 members (average age 57) by Colin Ingleby-Mackenzie, president of MCC, the committee states: "It does not believe that the question of the admission or otherwise of ladies should be decided on the criterion of the club's public image alone. Other factors should be considered such as the advantages

of adopting the general membership policy of other cricket clubs and thereby strengthening MCC's links with them; and the wider opportunities for corporate and public sponsorships which would almost certainly result from lady membership."

When the committee considered the possibility of redeveloping the Grand Stand in 1995, an application for funding was made to the National Lottery. Of the reasons given for rejecting this, the exclusion of women members was one.

The committee admits, though, that a mixed membership would alter the atmosphere of the club and, in particular, the pavilion, and that resources would be needed to adapt facilities such as the lavatories.

The only previous occasion on which this issue was debated was six years ago. Fewer than half the members voted. Of those who did, 2,371 were in favour of a mixed sex club and 4,727 against. The voting is expected to be closer this time, given the committee's lead.

Roads and schools hit hardest by first snow

By PETER FOSTER, NICK NUTTALL AND SIMON DE BRUKELLES

BOOKMAKERS, stranded motorists and snowballing children were all suffering from cold feet yesterday as heavy snowfalls swept across the country, shutting hundreds of schools and causing chaos on the roads.

The bookmakers responded to the Siberian conditions by cutting the odds on a white Christmas from 4/1 to 2/1, despite forecasters' predictions that warmer weather was on the way.

William Hill, who stand to lose up to £250,000 on a white Christmas, said they were still smarting from last year's record payouts. "We are not taking any chances. Last year the Met Office assured us it would not snow in London on Christmas day, but it did," a spokesman said.

The forecasters had more success yesterday, predicting that snow would arrive in London at 8am, which it did. Longer range forecasts, which include Christmas Day, will not be available until later in the week.

Throughout yesterday morning, police reported scores of minor road accidents

as southwestern Britain slipped and slithered its way to work. A woman was seriously injured in a crash between a car and a lorry on the A48 near Cross Hands, Carmarthenshire, and there was a 10 vehicle pile-up on the Exeter to Plymouth section of the A38.

Morning flights from Cardiff airport were cancelled because of drifting snow on the main runway and a 30mph limit was imposed on sections of the M4 between Cardiff and Swansea.

In Cornwall and South Wales, where more than 400 schools were closed, children made the most of the first major snowfall of the winter and went sledging and snowballing.

Motoring organisations reported that more than quadrupled as commuters ignored warnings and set off to work in the arctic conditions without antifreeze in their engines. Some rail services were also temporarily suspended, including the main Plymouth-Exeter line.

The dense band of snow, which drifted up to six feet deep on higher ground, moved



Children given an unexpected day off from school making the most of the snow at Cotham Gardens, Bristol. It is expected to thaw quickly today

steadily northwards throughout the day, carpeting most of England by nightfall. Temperatures struggled to rise above freezing at any point during the day and, according to the London Weather Centre, the wind chill factor made it feel as cold as -10C.

Across the country several roads, particularly minor

ones, were closed as councils struggled to spread enough grit and salt to keep everyone on the move. Major routes, including sections of the M5, M4 and the main A27 Brighton bypass, were brought to a standstill, as was the southern half of the Isle of Wight.

In Portsmouth, four inches of snow fell in five hours; the

city's first serious snowfall for ten years. Later in the day, as the snow reached North Wales and northern England, several roads were closed in Powys and across the Pennines. The Humber bridge, the Ouse bridge and elevated sections of the M62 were closed to high-sided vehicles as winds gusted to 50mph.

Water companies urged the managers of schools, factories, public buildings and offices to keep a minimum level of heating on over the Christmas period to reduce the risk of burst pipes and the threat of drought next year. They are also asking the Government to put pressure on councils to fit leak detection and automatic

supply shut down devices on pipes especially in schools.

Airlines were gearing up to meet the rush of Britons anxious to escape to sunnier regions for the Christmas break. Thailand, the Caribbean and Kenya are among the most popular destinations.

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Women warned of minicab danger

By KATHRYN KNIGHT

POLICE yesterday issued a warning about using unlicensed minicab drivers over Christmas and the New Year after a woman was raped after leaving a party.

The attack is the 66th sex attack by men posing as minicab drivers in London alone in the last year. Officers now fear rogue drivers may be targeting late-night partygoers over Christmas as the shortage of licensed cabs due to increased demand tempts women to use street taxis.

The latest victim, aged 22, climbed into a car which approached her as she walked to get a late-night snack on her way home from a party in Battersea, southwest London on December 7.

She fell asleep and awoke at a petrol station to discover she was locked in with her seat fully reclined and her seat belt fastened. She was then driven to a back street and raped. The terrified woman made her escape after the driver dropped her nearby.

Scotland Yard yesterday appealed for any other women approached in similar circumstances by drivers to come forward, among fears that the latest figures conceal the full extent of the problem.

Detective Superintendent Bill Grahamslaw, who heads the unit which tackles sex crime in London, said he was very concerned about the number of attacks, which had increased.

Nurse wins cash for theatre assault

By A CORRESPONDENT

A NURSE who was assaulted by a consultant during an operation was awarded £7,500 in damages yesterday.

Theatre sister Andrea Sefton, 46, sued consultant anaesthetist Pravin Kotak and Bury Health Care NHS Trust, in Greater Manchester, for emotional injury and harassment that she suffered following the attack in which she was raped three times on the head.

Miss Sefton claimed at Clerkenwell Court, London, that when she complained to her bosses about the assault her duties were switched to packing medical trays in a backroom. The award was made in an out-of-court settlement.

The assault happened at Fairfield General Hospital in Bury in November 1993 after Mr Kotak, the hospital's Medical Executive Director, had asked Miss Sefton to pass him an instrument during an operation.

"Before I could turn round I felt his knuckles hit my head three times," said Miss Sefton. "After we had dealt with the patient another theatre sister and myself approached Mr Kotak and I asked him not to hit me again. He went totally ballistic and started shouting at me."

Mr Kotak was unavailable for comment.

Police listened as women were killed with chisel

By PAUL WILKINSON

POLICE listened helplessly on the telephone as a killer used a chisel to torture his girlfriend and her mother to death. The cries for mercy of Eveline Oxoby and her daughter Lynn were recorded 20 miles away by control-room officers who had taken her 999 call.

By the time police arrived the two women were lying dead in the snow outside their home where they had fled to escape the frenzy of blows struck by Robert Rich, 50.

Yesterday he began a double life sentence for the killings, provoked, Sheffield Crown Court was told, because he was tormented by the belief that Lynn Oxoby, 30, was cheating on him.

During his six-day trial the jury heard the tape of Mrs Oxoby's emergency call from the home they all shared in Boroughbridge, North Yorkshire.

In it she is heard saying: "There is man going mad in my house. Please Bob, don't. She loves you. She loves you."

Rich's mother, Doris, 73, burst into tears in the public gallery when the jury returned their verdicts. But outside court Mrs Oxoby's sister Claudette, 61, said: "We're pleased with the outcome. I hope he rots in hell."

The court had been told that Rich, who denied murder, had developed a personality disorder, manifesting itself in

jealousy and obsession with his girlfriend, which could have caused him to kill. His counsel, Paul Worsley, QC, said that Rich had suffered a sudden and temporary loss of control and argued he was guilty of manslaughter on the grounds of diminished responsibility.

Rich, a retired RAF technician, stabbed his girlfriend 51 times before turning on her mother on January 31 last year.

Pathology reports said that the number of stab wounds suggested the two women might first have been tortured. Rich kept a diary of his girlfriend's movements, checked her car's mileage, mobile phone calls and bank account and followed her when she went out alone.



Lynn Oxoby: she was tortured to death

Bus driver must pay £5,000 for assault

By A CORRESPONDENT

A BUS driver who threw a 70-year-old passenger off his vehicle, leaving him unable to walk, was yesterday ordered to pay £5,000 compensation.

However, even though Eric Stewart recently received a shares windfall of more than £20,000, he claimed he could not pay compensation because he had spent all the money.

Thomas Valentine landed in a concrete flower bed after he was assaulted. He needed surgery to a leg and nearly died after complications during the operation.

Dundee Sheriff Court was told that Stewart, a worker-shareholder of the Travel Dundee bus company, received more than £20,000 when the company was taken over by West Midlands Buses. But George Donnelly, Stewart's solicitor, said he could not pay the compensation. He had gone on holiday in Florida, redecorated the house and bought a car with the cash.

Sheriff Richard Davidson said that, for no obvious reason, Stewart had picked on the passenger and nearly killed him. Specifying the compensation, he said: "This elderly gentleman's remaining days must be made comfortable. If you have to walk around because you can no longer afford a car, then that is tough."

Police chief stole from Harrods

By DAMIAN WHITWORTH

A CHIEF of police from Azerbaijan and his wife stole goods worth £1,000 from Harrods when they came to Britain to put their 14-year-old son into an Oxford boarding school.

Yesterday Khosrov Chamieva, 37, and Rena, 40, a teacher, who had denied the thefts, were fined £2,000 each at Horseferry Road Magistrates' Court, central London. The wealthy couple took more than 50 items, including scarves worth £149 each, pens, purses and designer sunglasses. They had \$10,000 (£6,135) in cash and more than £600

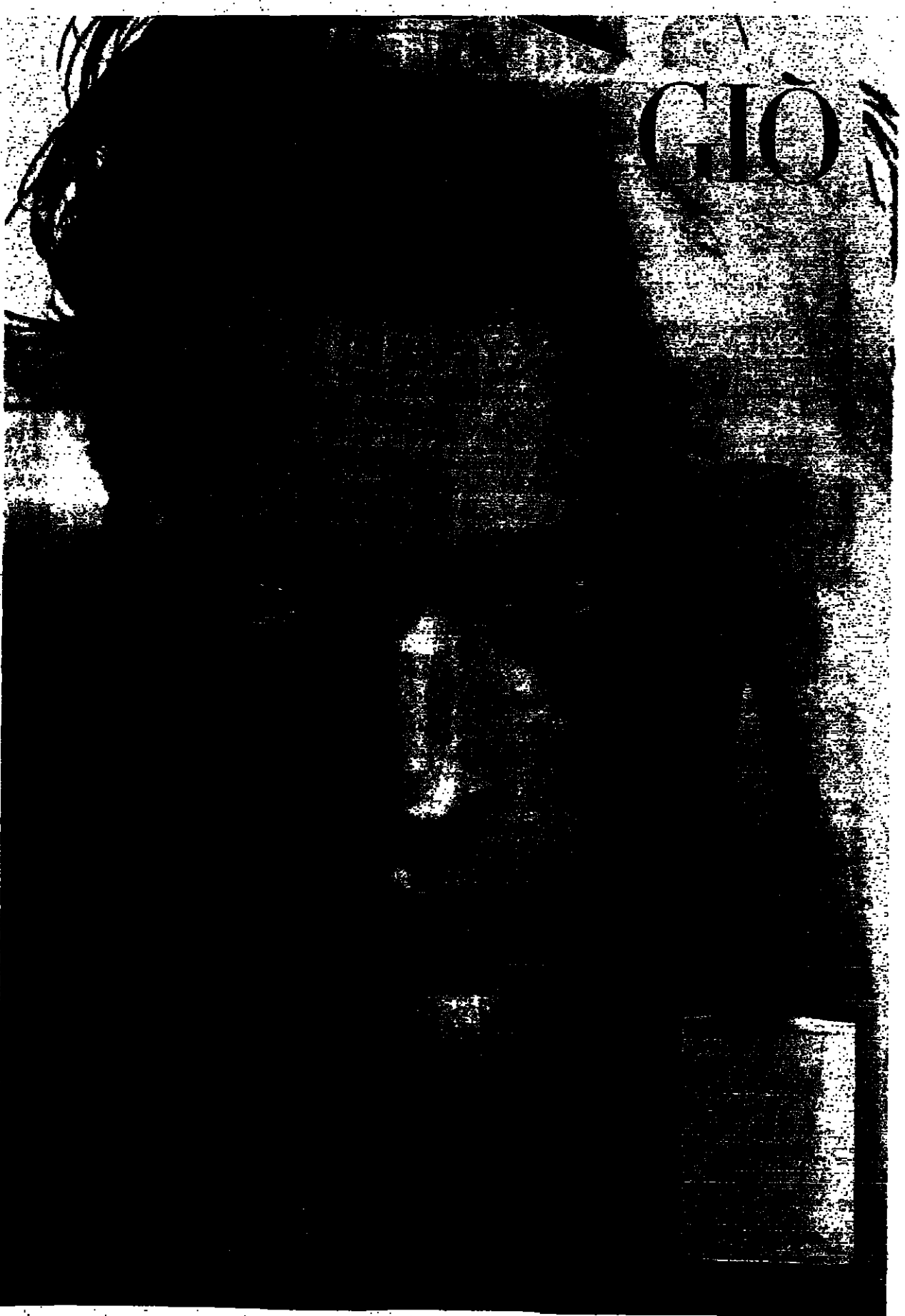
sterling with them during the 45-minute thefts.

The court was shown an hour-long video of the couple's visit to the store and the goods, with security tags missing, were laid out on tables. The couple, who spoke through an interpreter, came to England for a ten-day trip in September. They spent the night in police cells after being arrested on the eve of their return flight to Russia.

Mr Chamieva denied stealing a £107 pair of Ray-Ban sunglasses and a letter opener and his wife denied stealing the rest of a £1,082 haul. Astor detective Christopher Ryemill, told the court that

the couple were walking around the store separately during their visit but met on several occasions and that on one occasion Mrs Chamieva paid for an item before continuing to steal. She later claimed to police that she was intending to pay for everything in one go after selecting what she wanted.

At one stage Mr Chamieva passed his wife a pair of sunglasses. She placed them into her pocket before passing them back to her husband, after dropping the price ticket to the floor. Mr Chamieva was stopped after setting off an anti-theft alarm as he was about to leave the Knightsbridge store.



Suspended Labour MP appears in court

BY SHIRLEY ENGLISH

MOHAMMED SARWAR, the suspended Labour MP for Glasgow Govan, appeared in court for the first time yesterday to face charges of election fraud, attempting to pervert the course of justice and breaking the law on his election expenses.

The 45-year-old MP appeared in private at Glasgow Sheriff Court before Sheriff Charles MacFarlane and Procurator Fiscal Barry Dickson. He made no plea or declaration and was released on bail.

After the hearing Mr Sarwar issued a statement in which he said: "I reaffirm that I have done nothing wrong and I maintain that I am innocent of all charges." He said he had no intention of resigning but would not make his maiden speech to the House of Commons tomorrow as planned.

Under Scottish law, the Crown now has up to a year to draw up detailed charges, if any, against Mr Sarwar and take the case to court. Mr Sarwar could face a fine or jail if he is found guilty of charges of fraud in relation to the late registration of voters.

The millionaire cash and carry businessman, became Britain's first Muslim MP on May 1 and was the first MP ever to swear an oath to the House on the Koran.



Mohammed Sarwar after his court appearance in private in Glasgow yesterday

Doctors warned to be on alert for chicken flu

DOCTORS in Britain have been asked to look out for cases of chicken flu, a deadly new form of the disease that has already killed two people in Hong Kong.

Sir Kenneth Calman, the Chief Medical Officer, has written to all GPs warning them of the danger. So far, the disease is limited to Hong Kong, where health authorities have reported seven confirmed cases, two deaths, and an additional 12 suspected cases. The virus, called H5N1, has been found only in birds before the first human case appeared in the former colony in May.

Sir Kenneth has set in motion the first phase of the Government's flu pandemic "action plan", which is used whenever a new variety of flu emerges. He said yesterday: "All the preparations are in place to ensure that if the Hong Kong-type flu spreads we are well ahead. This is not a panic measure. It is a way of preparing for this kind of thing so we are ready."

The Public Health Laboratory Service monitors the flu strains in circulation by analysing swabs sent by a selection of GPs. So far, they have found no evidence of H5N1 in Britain, nor indeed of any flu outbreak. "Flu is at present at background levels," a PHLS spokesman said yesterday.

Disease that has killed two could spread to Britain, report Jonathan

Mirsky and Nigel Hawkes

The latest victims of the bird flu in Hong Kong, a boy and a girl aged two and three, were cousins of a five-year-old girl suffering from the disease, raising fears that it had begun to spread person-to-person rather than simply from chickens. A spokesman at Queen Mary Hospital in Hong Kong said the children were in "stable" condition after being admitted on Tuesday.

A massive surveillance operation has begun in Hong Kong on imported fowl from the Chinese mainland, which make up 75 per cent of the chickens eaten in the former colony. Starting next week, samples will be taken from every truck bringing chickens across the border. The Secretary for Economic Services, Stephen Yip, said yesterday that because of a technical "breakthrough", the govern-

ment could speed up the laboratory inspection of the samples. Before Christmas, he added, chicken farms in Hong Kong and in China would be checked. There is no health regulation requiring hygiene certificates for imported fowl.

Katherine Fok, the Secretary for Health and Welfare, said yesterday that medical staff throughout Hong Kong had been put on the alert for victims of the avian virus, although initial symptoms do not vary significantly from those of common flu. Hospitals have made contingency plans to handle more patients.

Doctors are concerned that the virus may already have mutated. Keiji Fukuda, from the Atlanta Centres for Disease Control, said yesterday: "It's possible the virus has been circulating among humans and that it's already changed a bit. Viruses change a lot and that's something that worries us."

Although it is not certain yet that H5N1 is transmitted from human to human, Dr Fukuda noted that one of the reasons most of the nine victims are children is that "kids like this are always rolling around on each other in school and playgrounds. If the virus is airborne or transmitted by touch, this is the group in which it would be most easily transmitted."



Campbell declared war on "yellow peril"

Stickers cover up secrets of the civil servants

BY VALERIE ELLIOTT

THE office worker's yellow sticky label emerged yesterday as a potential weapon for the Sir Humphreys of Whitehall to avoid the constraints of the proposed new Freedom of Information legislation.

Incriminating or sensitive information or remarks can be stuck on to files by officials, and if anyone requests release of the document under Freedom of Information, it is handed over without the yellow stickers.

The fascinating insight into the clandestine world of government was revealed in the Commons yesterday by Ronnie Campbell, Labour MP for Blyth Valley. He had observed the practice used by officials in Australia and was anxious that the use of the stickers — which he dubbed "the yellow peril" — should be outlawed under future British legislation.

Mr Campbell asked Dr David Clark, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, if he would make it a specific offence for officials to remove such sticky labels.

He said: "This practice was really not right. People were not getting the right information and were being cheated of it."

Dr Clark accepted that Mr Campbell had raised "a real point" but was unclear whether it could be made a specific offence.

He told MPs on the public administration committee that Government departments would have to look at the whole issue of record-keeping, and there would be an obligation on them to set new record management standards.

He was unclear whether the practice of using stickers would be covered by the proposed new criminal offence for the "wilful or reckless destruction, alteration or withholding of records relevant to an investigation by the Information Commissioner. It was clear that MPs on the committee were sceptical about the proposals and how civil servants would "get round" any tough law.

Rhodri Morgan, committee chairman, asked Dr Clark: "Will it be a case of more lunches at the Reform Club rather than circulating advice to ministers?" He urged him to introduce the offence in advance of the Freedom of Information: "If the new criminal offence comes into being when Fok becomes law then you can imagine a whole process of reading and shredding by officials."

Smear-test labs face shake-up to allay fears

BY IAN MURRAY, MEDICAL CORRESPONDENT

CERVICAL screening services are to be reviewed after Health Department figures disclosed yesterday that two out of five laboratories fail to meet national standards and one in five does too little work to ensure staff maintain the necessary skills for their work.

The review comes after a series of smear-test scares which have shaken public confidence. Sir Kenneth Calman, the Chief Medical Officer, has ordered a rapid review of the work at all 181 laboratories involved in screening in England. It should be complete by February. Lack of resources for training staff and running the labs is one of the issues which will be considered.

Sir Kenneth said yesterday he would not hesitate to close down any unit carrying out fewer than 15,000 screenings a year if it was failing patients in any way. The figures show that 34 laboratories handle fewer than that number and that 12 of these also failed to meet the national target for test results. Sir Kenneth said two of these had already been closed and the others would come under close scrutiny.

The new regulations make it compulsory over the next six months for all laboratories to be officially accredited. This means that staff and facilities must meet approved standards and are then subject to external audit of their performance every five years.

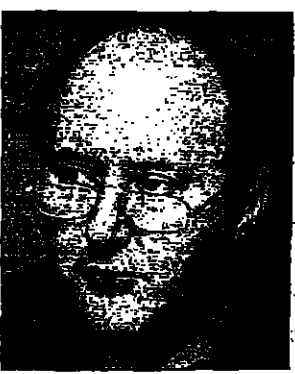
Until now accreditation has been voluntary and one laboratory in three has not joined the scheme. They include Kent and Canterbury Hospital, where 91,000 smears had to be rechecked after faults emerged in the quality of screening

there. The laboratory there has now been closed and work transferred to the William Harvey Hospital at Ashford, Kent, where, according to the new figures, test results are still not meeting national targets.

Under current guidelines, it is expected that only between 5 per cent and 9 per cent of tests should be inadequate, either because of faulty technique or because of the woman's condition. A higher number than this suggests that techniques are of poor standard. A lower number can mask the fact the laboratory is failing to spot women with abnormalities.

The figures show that 80 of the laboratories have results which are outside these target figures, 57 of them with too many inadequate smears and 23 of them with too few. The Royal Albert Infirmary in Wigan, Lancashire, has 34.8 per cent, while the Royal Surrey County Hospital only registers 1.7 per cent.

Staff from laboratories which do not meet the targets will, where necessary, have refresher training.



Calman: will not hesitate to shut failing units

Children given chance to win days out in Europe

BY VALERIE ELLIOTT, WHITEHALL EDITOR

A DAY out with the British Ambassador in Paris or managing Barcelona football club are among the prizes on offer to British schoolchildren in a government attempt to make Europe popular with the young.

One of Tony Blair's aims for the British presidency of the EU is to reduce Euroscepticism and to enthuse young people about Europe. Doug Henderson, Minister for Europe, teamed up yesterday with Baroness Blackstone, Education Minister, and Chris Rogers from BBC's Newsround to launch a series of competitions for children.

"Ambassador for a Day" is open to 11 to 15 year olds and will allow 100 winners to spend a day in Europe. Among the prizes are a day

with Bobby Robson, of Barcelona; Klaus Kinkel, the German Foreign Minister; a French cheesemaker; a designer at the Krizia fashion house in Milan; Michael Jay, the British Ambassador in Paris; and a footballer from Borussia Dortmund.

Entrants will have to answer three questions about the EU and state what they would like to do if chosen to be an ambassador for a day in France. A thousand youngsters will be selected for the second stage of the competition when they will be asked to produce a creative entry linked to Europe, the millennium and the environment. They will be judged by region and the winners will spend a day in Europe. Another competition, "Cele-

brating Europe", could win £5,000 for the school, college or youth group which creates a project to highlight the benefit of links between young people in the United Kingdom and the Continent.

Budding fashion designers are being tempted to compete to stage a catwalk show at the start of British Fashion Week next year and a European youth football tournament is also planned.

A special schools pack, "Partners in Europe", is also available to help schools develop partnerships with schools abroad. The launch took place yesterday at Deptford Green School, New Cross, South London, which has partnership projects with schools in Berlin, Paris and Lisbon.

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Editor's
spoon
diaries a

مكتبة من الكتب

Editor defends spoof Clark diaries as 'tease'

ALAN CLARK, the Conservative MP and diarist, loves to be "naughty and famous" but is not prepared to be teased by a newspaper, it was claimed yesterday.

Max Hastings, Editor of the *Evening Standard*, said in a written statement read to the High Court in London that he had been surprised that Mr Clark did not see the joke in a series of spoof articles, *Alan Clark's Secret Political Diary*, in the newspaper.

Mr Clark is claiming damages and an injunction preventing the London paper from further publication of the articles which, he says, confuse the public and damage his reputation as a "serious man of letters". Mr Hastings said the articles, which were written by a journalist, enlarged Mr Clark's reputation for "general naughtiness" and maintained his public profile.

He said that the two men, who had been friends for some ten years, discussed the possibility of legal action at a lunch in June at Wilton's, a fashionable restaurant in Piccadilly.

"He asked whether or not that [legal action] would affect my relationship with him," Mr Hastings said. "I said that it would not and that, if he wished to pursue the matter through the court, then that was his prerogative. We would each have our respective legal teams in position and may the best man win."

The spoofs, illustrated with a photograph of Mr Clark, are written by Peter Bradshaw, a staff journalist on the newspaper. Mr Hastings said: "The Peter Bradshaw pieces are intended to be — and are — a perfectly legitimate tease."

Defence claims articles simply add to 'naughty' reputation of Tory MP, writes

Emma Wilkins

being in the best traditions of parody and satirical writing. I am sorry that Mr Clark has shown himself not prepared to be teased, especially as, with the greatest respect to Mr Clark, he has always encouraged and thrived on publicity. He loves to be famous and loves to be naughty."

The "preposterous" content of the diaries, which include references to women in Mr Clark's constituency of Kensington and Chelsea throwing their undergarments at him in excited admiration, were a clear indication of a spoof, Mr

Hastings said. "I do not believe that any interested reader of these articles would seriously believe they were by Alan Clark."

According to evidence given by Donald Treford, a newspaper columnist and former Editor of *The Observer*, Mr Clark's reputation could not be damaged by the articles. "There really is no such thing as bad publicity. Anything Mr Clark does or is thought to have done, however disreputable to some, could, in my view, only add to his value and demand for his work."

He told the court: "The celebrity figure gains glamour whatever is written about them because any dirt doesn't seem to stick."

At this stage the judge, Mr Justice Lightman, intervened. "It didn't work out like that for Oscar Wilde," he said.

"But that was a long time ago, my lord, and before the tabloid press," Mr Treford said.

Matthew Evans, chairman of the publishing firm Faber and Faber, said he could not believe that any reader would think the spoofs were written by Mr Clark. If anyone believed they were, it might be "marginally" to his disadvantage, but would probably not dissuade them from buying the genuine article.

Both Mr Evans and Mr Treford appeared as witnesses for the *Evening Standard* to support the newspaper's defence that Mr Clark's reputation and future earning prospects could not be damaged by publication of the spoofs.

The case was adjourned until January 12.



Clark: he is seeking to halt publication

University applications fall despite late rush

By DAVID CHARTER, EDUCATION CORRESPONDENT

TWENTY thousand fewer people have applied for university places next year, despite an unprecedented last-minute rush, the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service said yesterday.

A sixth of the 326,220 candidates for courses next autumn applied in the four days before the deadline passed on Monday. Despite a 6 per cent fall, ministers welcomed the rally as proof that they were winning the argument over next year's £1,000 tuition fees.

There had been fears of a much larger drop than 20,817 candidates, especially since 26,000 extra students were

admitted this October after a stampede to avoid the fee.

Tony Higgins, chief executive of UCAS, said that potential students might be waiting for clearer details of the fees and a loan scheme being devised by the Government.


"There has been an unprecedented deluge of applications in the last few days leading up to the closing date, with 52,300 forms received in the last four days alone," he said. There appeared to be "considerable misunderstanding" over the new financial arrangements.

Baroness Blackstone, the Higher Education Minister,

said she was confident universities would fill their places next year. A leaflet was going out explaining fees would be means tested.

Funding details were also published yesterday which showed tuition fees will provide less than half the money that the Government advisers say is needed to avoid "significant damage" to universities.


The course charges next autumn will provide £126 million, the Higher Education Funding Council announced. Sir Ron Dearing, in his review of higher education for the Government, said that £350 million was required.



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The Rev Frederic Williams, a rural dean in North Yorkshire, who died with his daughter

Vicar and his daughter die in road crash

By PAUL WILKINSON

A COUNTRY vicar and his 17-year-old daughter were killed yesterday as he took her on a driving lesson. The Rev Frederic Williams and his daughter, Stephanie, died when the Citroën she was driving collided with a lorry.

Mr Williams, 56, known as Barry, was rural dean of Buckrose, with responsibility for 15 parishes in North Yorkshire. The Archbishop of York, the Most Rev David Hope, said prayers for the Williams family. He was deeply shocked, and Mr Williams would be sadly missed, Dr Hope said.

The collision happened as the Williams's car pulled from a lane on to the A64 about a mile from their home at Rillington, John Clayton, a traffic constable with North Yorkshire Police, said that shortly before the accident Mr Williams and his daughter had swapped seats. "Unfortunately, the girl driver was only a provisional licence-holder and a very inexperienced motorist. The family is devastated and distraught."

The driver of the articulated lorry, from Preston, Lancashire, was not hurt. Stephanie was a pupil at Norton College, near Malton, where her father was chairman of governors. She had worked part-time as a waitress in a local pub, and had wanted to become a doctor.

Peter Burton, the headteacher, said that Stephanie had been an exceptional student and had been offered a place at medical school. "The school was assembled and the prayers of the Williams family. Our thoughts go out to her older sister, Helen, and her mother, Jenny. We are all in shock."



Stephanie Williams, who was learning to drive

The Rev Basil Siddons, superintendent minister of the Pickering Methodist Circuit, said Mr Williams "was a lovely man, a super guy. He was extremely sincere and devout."

The Rev Jonathan Couper, vicar of Christ Church, Bridlington, said: "He was a great friend, wise and loyal. We will miss his sensitivity and zeal. He was very highly thought of. Stephanie was a lovely girl who was doing her A levels. She was a girl of great faith."

Mary Wilkinson, Rillington's representative on Ryedale District Council, said: "The village is stunned by the news."

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Another slice of reality in BBC's Peeping Tom TV

SOME of the public's most private moments are to be broadcast in a new spate of fly-on-the-wall documentaries to capitalise on the popularity of "voyeuristic" television.

In a move which will reignite the debate on intrusive television, the BBC is to run an eight-part series set in a GP's surgery which films patients during appointments with their doctors, discussing problems ranging from heroin addiction to contraception.

Cameras will also follow the working life of a middle-class male prostitute, employed by wealthy women many years older than himself, who says he works in the sex industry to keep his wife and children in comfort. The cameras stop at the bedroom door, but sound effects are included. BBC2 has

Voyeurism back on our screens

as the docu-soap enthralls British

viewers, reports

Carol Midgley

only just finished screening *Breaking Point*, a six-part series which filmed couples undergoing sessions with Relate counsellors about their crumbling marriages. On BBC1, *Hotel*, which followed the often cringe-making lives of staff at Liverpool's Adelphi

Hotel, and *Holiday Reps* which filmed travel couriers in Lanzarote and Ibiza, focusing on their careers and their sex lives, were both hugely popular.

The GP's surgery, considered to be sacred in terms of confidentiality, was one of the few areas not yet invaded by the fly-on-the-wall camera. But 80 per cent of patients approached at the practice in Minehead, Somerset, agreed to be filmed over a period of eight months. *Doctor's Orders* will be screened on BBC1 early next year.

Many documentary-makers believe the public mood is changing and Britons are losing their traditional reserve and enjoying "opening up" to the camera in the style pioneered by the Americans.

Alan Yentob, the BBC's director of television, said: "The British are changing. We would not be able to make these programmes if they were not willing and were not changing their mood."

Paul Slade, one of the GPs appearing in *Doctor's Orders*, said that he had told cameramen to stop filming "once or twice" when he felt the patient was touching on "very private" areas. Asked about the question of confidentiality, he said: "The general principle is that the patients had given their full consent and so had we."

He said that he and his colleagues agreed to take part



Doctors Paul Slade and Huw Thomas, who feature in the new series *Doctor's Orders*, set in a GP surgery

to show GPs' jobs in a realistic light. "People will see that we have off days as well," he said.

The prostitute, Joel Ryan, earns an average £85,000 a year with 1,200 clients, the film relates. He lives in Melbourne, Australia, and became a gigolo when his work as a carpenter dried up. He charges \$180 (£75) an hour.

His wife, Catherine, who also agreed to be filmed and takes many of the bookings on the telephone when her husband is out, says: "As long as I don't know any of the details I can mostly handle it well... I do know he loves me and he

doesn't love them. If he had an affair, I don't think I could handle it."

The BBC will continue to cater for lovers of docu-soaps with *The Cruise*, filming holidaymakers aboard the luxury cruise ship *Galaxy*, and *Superstore* about the staff working at a Tesco store.

The acclaimed writer of *Band of Gold*, Kay Mellor, will make her BBC debut next year as part of the corporation's new £220 million winter television schedule unveiled yesterday.

Her new serial tackles the world of women's football and

is a departure from her long-running ITV drama about a group of northern prostitutes. Filmed in Derbyshire, it centres on a group of women who live for their Sunday morning matches.

Other highlights include the actress Pauline Collins making a rare outing in *The Ambassador*, about Britain's diplomatic representative in Dublin. She plays a widow coping with her high-pressure job and the resentment of her son. Paul McGann returns to British television next year when BBC2 presents a new four-part adaptation of Dick-

ens' *Our Mutual Friend*. He plays the male lead, Eugene Wrayburn, with Anna Friel as Bella Wilfer.

The creator of *Men Behaving Badly*, Simon Nye, has written two new comedies series for BBC1 and BBC2. *The Last Salute* looks back on the Sixties rivalry between the RAC and AA, and *Do You Want Me?* is a contemporary story, starring Charlotte Coleman, about an urban couple dropped into village life.

Jonathan Creek returns for a new series of six mysteries starring the comedians Caroline Quentin and Alan Davies.



Trevor and Tracey confessed all in *Breaking Point*

Insurers refuse to drop gene tests

BY IAN MURRAY
MEDICAL CORRESPONDENT

GOVERNMENT advisers yesterday called for a two-year moratorium on requiring applicants for life insurance to supply the results of genetic tests, but the insurance industry rejected the idea.

The Association of British Insurers, which published a code of conduct on the use of genetic tests yesterday, had discarded the idea that it should include a moratorium. Peter Jacobs, the association's chairman, said: "There are eight genetic tests which are reliable and which demonstrate either an additional risk, or the absence of risk in which case the

consumer benefits by paying a standard premium," he said. No company asks people directly if they have had a test, but application forms make clear that the insurer must be told everything they know about their own health.

"If a claim is made on a policy, failure to have revealed the results of a genetic test would be grounds to oppose payment," a spokesman for the association said.

Several large companies have self-imposed moratoriums on the use of genetic test results.

The proposal for a general moratorium came from the Human Genetics Advisory Commission, which was set up a year ago to take an overview of developments in

the field. "It is not safe to make predictive statements about genetic tests," said Sir Colin Campbell, the commission chairman. "It is far too early to be able to reach any conclusions about how genetic testing can be used to predict life expectancy or the onset of ill-health. Genetic testing is in its infancy."

He added that many groups feared that they would encounter discrimination. There was also a lack of research in Britain about the ethical, legal and social implications of genetic testing.

The association's code emphasises that applicants will not be required to take genetic tests but must supply existing results when asked the relevant question.

Test for Neanderthal DNA

BY NIGEL HAWKES, SCIENCE EDITOR

SCIENTISTS hope to extract the DNA of Neanderthal Man from fossilised faeces found in a cave on the Rock of Gibraltar.

The fossils - palaeontologists call them coprolites - date from 45,000 years ago and were found by an expedition led by Chris Stringer of the Natural History Museum.

He is uncertain whether they were the product of Neanderthal Man, a hyena or a wolf. Brief examination shows that

they contain fragments of rabbit bone and shells from shellfish, which the people who occupied the cave are known to have eaten. The coprolites will be sent to a laboratory in Munich run by Svante Paabo, an expert in ancient DNA, who last year extracted Neanderthal DNA from bones.

Professor Stringer said yesterday: "If we do find they are from Neanderthals, and can extract DNA from cells shed

by the person who produced them, we could compare the sequences with the ones from the bones. That would give us a much better basis for comparing Neanderthals to modern humans."

Exploration of the Gibraltar caves has shown that Neanderthals ate shellfish, tortoises, nuts, seeds and a variety of game. They occupied the caves on and off for 60,000 years, between 100,000 and 40,000 years ago.

Staff considered suitable for driving trains will be selected after interview and be trained by the company. They will be expected also to master customer-service skills, such as helping passengers on and off trains.

The move was immediately ridiculed by Lew Adams, general secretary of the drivers' union, ASLEF. "It is nonsense to think that you can hire a train driver just like that. It takes 18 months to train a driver so they are going to be late getting their trains started. People keep trying to get staff to do every job but they find it doesn't work."

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Verse to woman who inspired late Poet Laureate found inscribed in book on architecture

Poem throws light on Betjeman's secret love

By DALYA ALBERGE, ARTS CORRESPONDENT

A PREVIOUSLY unknown poem dedicated by Sir John Betjeman to his unattainable love, Myfanwy Piper, has been discovered in a book on Sir John Soane, the architect of the Bank of England.

The poem was unearthed among hundreds of books and documents being sold by her estate following her death in January at the age of 85. It reads: "Sir John has blessed our Union / Myfanwy my own / Here in his grey communion / Of plaster cast and stone / Green to the skylight / Sir John has made the walls / How chaste and mild the high light / On child and cherub falls. March 28, 1939, J.B."

Both Myfanwy and Betjeman were married to other

people — she to the artist John Piper in 1937 and he to Penelope Chetwode in 1933. She was the librettist of Benjamin Britten's operas.

Betjeman's biographer, Bevis Hillier, described the poem as "a delightful jeu d'esprit", possibly a souvenir of a delightful afternoon spent together. Edward Maggs, the antiquarian dealer who discovered the poem while cataloguing Mrs Piper's books and is selling it for £950, suggested that she and Betjeman may have had a "jolly day out" at the Sir John Soane Museum in Lincoln's Inn Fields, London.

Finding another poem dedicated to Mrs Piper has excited scholars. She inspired Betjeman, a former Poet Laureate,

to write two of his best poems, most famously *Myfanwy*: "Kind o'er the kinderbank leans my Myfanwy / White o'er the playen the sheen of her dress / Fresh from the bathroom and soft in the nursery / Soap-scented fingers I long to caress. / Were you a prefect and head of your dormitory? / Were you a hockey girl, tennis or gym? / Who was your favourite? / Who had a crush on you? / Which were the baths where they taught you to swim...?" The poem, with *Myfanwy* at Oxford, appeared in his 1958 *Collected Poems*.

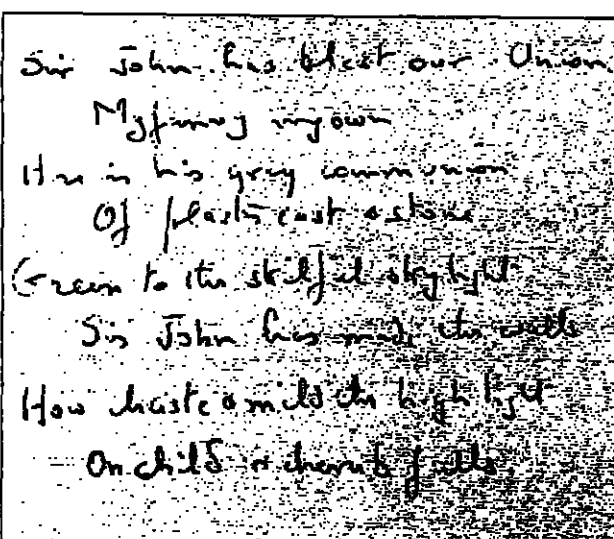
It seems likely that she was his muse, admired only from afar by a poet whom Philip Larkin once said wrote poems that sprung "from what he

really feels about real life". Mr Hillier said there was no evidence of an affair, "primarily because both the Betjemans and the Pipers were so close as couples".

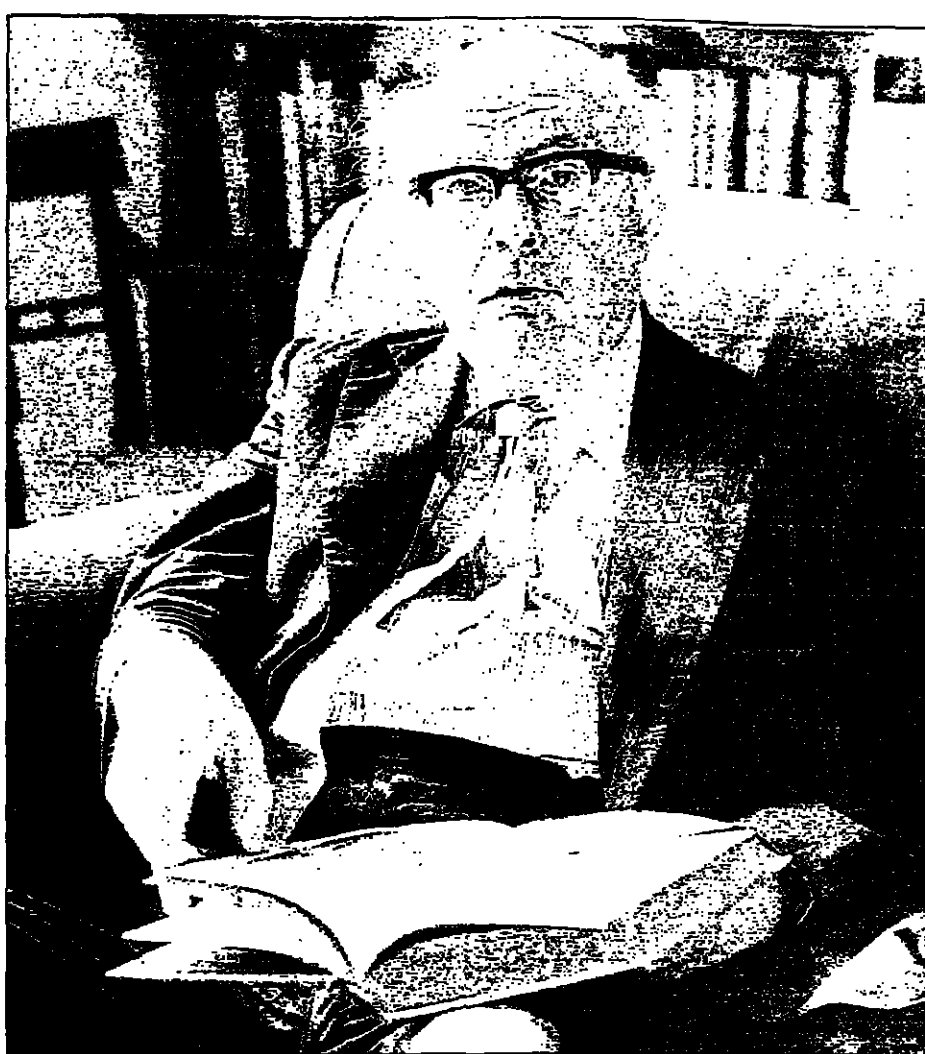
But he added: "One doesn't rule out anything in human relationships. There is no doubt that John Betjeman found Myfanwy very attractive. His affectionate nickname for her was Goldilocks. Meeting her seemed to him like the fulfilment of a prophecy because, in a book he loved as a schoolboy — Arthur Machen's *The Secret Glory* — a 'golden Myfanwy' was mentioned, and John Betjeman uses just that phrase in one of his two published poems about her. She was the strong kind of woman who particularly appealed to him."

He doubts that Betjeman — Poet Laureate from 1972 to 1984 — would have betrayed John Piper, a man who became perhaps the best of all his friends. Piper once said that if he had to choose between his art and laughs with Betjeman, he would unhesitatingly opt for the latter. The two of them collaborated on the *Shell Guides* to the counties of England, a reflection of their shared passion for architecture.

Mr Maggs added: "Betjeman made a great display of being madly in love with her. She was the ideal woman. She was perfect because she was not only gorgeous, beautiful, kind and supportive, but also because she was married to someone else."



The poem to Mrs Piper, right, was jotted down in a book on Soane's architecture



Betjeman "made a great display of being madly in love" with Myfanwy Piper

Saturday in THE TIMES



NATALIE IMBRUGLIA
Soap star to singer
Plus: Books of the Year



The great new comic

Rival dealers ignore Sotheby's lead

By DALYA ALBERGE and DANIEL MCGORRY

ART dealers and rival auction houses yesterday rejected the suggestion by Sotheby's that they should follow its example in tightening sales procedures.

Sotheby's introduced new rules earlier this week after a £6.7 million investigation set up after *The Times* and an undercover team from Channel 4 reported that staff had been rigging auctions

and illegally exporting works of art. Diana Brooks, Sotheby's chief executive, said she believed that "others in the arts world will follow us".

But a spokesman for the British Antique Dealers Association said: "There is nothing we can learn from Sotheby's. We already have a policy of due diligence and our own code of conduct not to deal in illegal goods. It was there before Sotheby's problems were ever exposed."

At Christie's, a spokesman said: "It has

always been our policy to observe the laws and regulations of all countries in which we operate."

Professor Lord Renfrew of Kaimsthorn, director of the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research at Cambridge, yesterday expressed dismay at the lack of interest in Sotheby's lead. He said Sotheby's had taken "a great step forward" and added: "We will set out to monitor more closely what other auction houses are doing."

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Make someone happy this Christmas

Victory for boys who sued unsafe school



Simon Worthington and Rod Salisbury leaving court yesterday with Simon's father, Peter. He wanted the boys to "learn in a safe environment"

TWO pupils at a dilapidated school in Liverpool were celebrating yesterday after the city council was convicted of putting their health at risk.

Rod Salisbury, 16, and Simon Worthington, 15, from Childwall Comprehensive School, near Allerton, claimed victory in a landmark case after a magistrate ruled that youngsters were in danger of being electrocuted.

So much water had leaked into classrooms and laboratories in a wing of the 1,300-pupil school that the electrical installation should have been the same as for bathrooms, Liverpool Magistrates' Court was told.

The council has been ordered to repair damaged light sockets, switches and fittings as well as remove and replace any loose masonry in danger of falling on to pupils.

The case, brought by the teenagers

Council convicted in landmark case brought by two teenagers, writes Russell Jenkins

and their parent-governor fathers, David Salisbury and Peter Worthington, is the first criminal prosecution of its kind under the Environmental Protection Act 1990. The proceedings were monitored by education authorities throughout the country.

The schoolboys complained that the school, some of which dates from the Victorian era, was so squalid that its condition constituted a risk to the health of pupils, teachers and visitors.

Expert evidence highlighted leaking roofs, crumbling masonry on outside walls, disintegrating fixtures and fittings and mould and damp so pervasive that it exacerbated asthma. It was

claimed that the school needed emergency repairs estimated at £2 million.

The city council denied four charges of causing statutory nuisance under the Act.

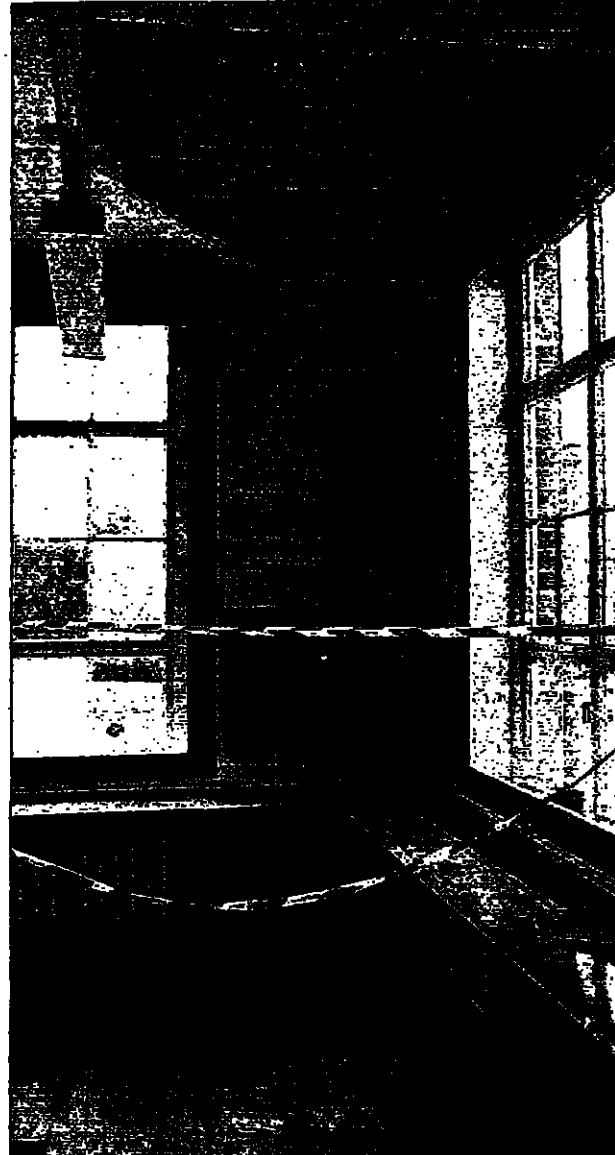
David Tapp, the stipendiary magistrate, said that the court had sympathy with those who said that "children shouldn't be educated in a building like that in this day and age". However, he cleared the council of almost all the charges, except the dangerous electrical fittings and some minor repair work, because the prosecution had not brought the burden of proof needed in a criminal case.

Mr Tapp said in a 25-page judgment:

"I am sure that the condition of the electrical installation due to the ingress of water and the resultant inadequacy of certain safety devices are likely to cause injury to the complainants. And therefore the premises are in such a state as to be prejudicial to health and a statutory nuisance exists."

After the hearing, the pupils drank soft drinks as their parents and lawyer toasted the result with champagne. Simon, wearing his school tie, said: "We have won. It wasn't easy, but it was something that had to be done. I hope now the state of the school can be improved."

Peter Worthington, Simon's father, said he was delighted that the magistrate had delivered the decision they wanted "to help the children learn in a safe environment that is properly maintained by the school".



Crumbling masonry in a Childwall School classroom

Dismissed teacher claims witch-hunt

BY A CORRESPONDENT

A TEACHER who claims she was sacked for being too strict with pupils told an industrial tribunal yesterday that she was the victim of a witch-hunt.

Clare Head, 54, dismissed from the £1,700-a-term St David's School at Ashford, Surrey, after a governors' disciplinary hearing, claims unfair dismissal.

The hearing at Croydon, South London, was told that Mrs Head, from Teddington, southwest London, often played classical music to her class of eight and nine-year-old girls because she thought it helped them to concentrate.

Margaret Langley, the deputy head, said: "I believe it appropriate to have a quiet room to aid concentration. It is not common practice in junior schools to play music in class." She said she investigated a number of complaints from parents. One had said her daughter was afraid to ask to go to the lavatory; others had complained their daughters were being given too much homework and were afraid to complain about Mrs Head.

Judith Osborne, the head teacher, said that over the years attempts to make Mrs Head comply with the standards of the school had failed. The disciplinary panel had had to decide whether to believe the parents or Mrs Head, who said their complaints were exaggerated.

'Right to die' doctor prepares own death

BY AUDREY MAGEE
IRELAND CORRESPONDENT

AN IRISH doctor involved in at least three cases of euthanasia in Britain and Ireland has left for Thailand to carry out his own death.

Paddy Leahy, 80, has bladder cancer and has refused further operations. He intends to kill himself next month by swallowing a lethal dose of morphine, and has already said goodbye to his daughter and son.

Dr Leahy, who has a second home in Thailand, has long advocated patients' right to choose their time of death. Euthanasia is illegal in Ireland and is condemned by the Roman Catholic Church and the Irish Medical Council.

The doctor, who worked in a health centre in Ballyfermot, Dublin, admitted helping a friend to die with morphine pills two years ago. Dr Leahy said he had helped scores of other terminally ill patients to die, including Second World War veterans in a Coventry hospital.

He said he would "fight like a tiger" to save a patient, but abhorred the suffering imposed on the terminally ill. "Is it advisable to leave a man in even an hour of unnecessary agony when he's determined to die? I am outraged how suffering and torment are tolerated for so long."

No legal action has been taken against Dr Leahy. His case was referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Irish Medical Council by Bill Tormey, a consultant chemical pathologist at Dublin's Belmont Hospital. But Dr Tormey withdrew his allegations in 1995 because of Dr Leahy's age.

Hangover hope lies in herbal shops

BY NIGEL HAWKES
SCIENCE EDITOR

THE long-sought hangover cure may already be sitting on the shelves of herbal medicine shops, according to some researchers.

They believe that a dose of an amino acid supplement called N-acetyl-cysteine (NAC), which is widely available in such shops, can ease the discomfort as the body deals with the strain of too much alcohol.

Carl Waltenbaugh, an alcohol researcher of Northwestern University, Chicago, told *New Scientist*: "People I know say that by taking one or two grams of NAC, their head clears in 20 minutes. But it's only anecdotal."

There are scientific reasons for believing that NAC might work. In the body, both ethanol, the normal form of alcohol in drinks, and methanol, which is present in smaller amounts, are broken down by enzymes. These need the aid of two "helper" substances to work effectively.

One of these helpers, glutathione, is used to clear away powerful oxygen radicals produced by the breakdown of ethanol and methanol. It is in limited supply, and if it runs out, the radicals may do tissue damage and add to the hangover sensations.

NAC might repair the deficiency by replenishing the body with the amino acid cysteine, the main component of glutathione, argues *New Scientist*.

The idea ties in with traditional Chinese medicine cures such as the "prairie oyster" — a raw egg in tomato juice. Eggs are rich in cysteine, so could have much the same effect as NAC.

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Mandelson told to reveal more of dome's secrets

PETER MANDELSON should spend more time answering MPs' questions about the Millennium Dome, according to a report published yesterday, which attacks the secrecy surrounding the project.

The report from the Culture, Media and Sport Committee called for an extension of the monthly five-minute Commons appearance by Mr Mandelson, the Minister without Portfolio, who is overseeing the dome exhibition.

The committee, chaired by Gerald Kaufman, complained that the project organisers, New Millennium Experience, had failed to provide enough information about their plans. "At times the process of discover-

MPs demand extra time for key questions that require answers, writes

Polly Newton

ering the proposals for the content of the dome was akin to drawing teeth.

"From what we know so far, the Millennium Experience is not so much a journey through time as ... a journey into the

unknown." The report supports the Government's decision not to scrap the project, saying that "there was never a realistic prospect that the money committed to Greenwich could be diverted to another, appropriate single project". But it warns of a series of potential pitfalls. They include delays to the completion of the Jubilee Line, which will connect the dome site to Central London, and a failure to begin marketing the exhibition early enough.

The committee says that New Millennium Experience has not explained how it would deal with a shortfall in projected visitor numbers. The report states: "We are deeply concerned by the attitude of London Underground towards facilitating easy and comfortable transport into its station at the dome site."

It says that little is known about the strategy to attract visitors. There was "no clear and catchy slogan, no logo, in fact no visible marketing campaign at all". The committee will hold further inquiries, beginning early next year, in an attempt to discover more about the exhibition.

Speaking at a press conference, Mr Kaufman said that members wanted to give New Millennium Experience an opportunity to provide more information. "If they will not produce this information for us, then perhaps we might run out of courtesy."

He said the committee needed to know much more about the dome before it could confidently predict success for the project. "If this was Steven Spielberg or the Disney Cor-

poration, I might be happily tantalised. But this is a major public investment of taxpayers' money."

Mr Mandelson said he was "extremely encouraged" by the report because the committee had supported the decision to go ahead with the dome project. "I think their concerns are misplaced in relation to

transport, accountability and marketing, but with a project of this magnitude there is no room for complacency." He has written to the Leader of the House, Ann Taylor, suggesting that he be allowed more time to answer questions.

A spokesman for New Millennium Experience said last night: "We will address a lot of

these concerns in the first quarter of 1998. That is how we always planned to do it. We don't want to give everything away too soon."

Tony Blair forecast yesterday that the dome would win public support when it opened. During Prime Minister's Questions, he said: "When it comes to the year

2000, people will see that the right decision has been made."

Francis Maude, the Shadow Culture Secretary, backed the report's criticisms, but Michael Heseltine, the former Deputy Prime Minister and champion of the dome project, said New Millennium Experience would be "crazy" to release details too soon.



The Millennium Dome, pictured from the Thames Barrier, lights up the night sky. The secrecy surrounding the project has been criticised



Mandelson, left, was challenged by Kaufman's report

NEWS IN BRIEF

Snatched baby is found safe

A five-month-old baby was found safe and well yesterday, six hours after she was abducted. Rhianne Crutchley, of Willenhall, near Wolverhampton, disappeared after a woman who called at her home offered to give her mother, Lyndsey Nesbitt, a pushchair.

The woman claimed she had lost her house keys and was invited to stay the night. When Miss Nesbitt awoke in the morning, the woman and the baby had disappeared. Police found the baby in a car 15 miles away in Bordesley Green. A man aged 38 and a woman aged 23 were arrested.

Security arrest

The head of the security firm SAS, which runs private street patrols in Bristol, has been arrested. Avon and Somerset police seized a shotgun and ammunition, CS gas canisters and a drug at the home of Andrew Burke, 44, of Clifton, Bristol. He was freed on bail.

Bigger breakfast

Chris Evans has increased listenership of Virgin Radio's Breakfast Show by 46.5 per cent from 1.6 million to 2.3 million - since he took it over in October, according to figures collected by the radio rating authority, Rajar. Radio 1 attracted 4.6 million.

Newt case

A Suffolk man who cleaned out a pond on a common was fined £600 at Lowestoft for damaging a habitat of the protected great crested newt. The case against Norman Jay, 41, is thought to be the first under 1994 Conservation of Natural Habitat Regulations.

Boy rescued

A boy aged 12 had a narrow escape after falling asleep in a skip and being tipped into the compactor of a refuse lorry. The driver spotted the boy, who had run away from a Nottingham children's home, as the mechanical jaws were about to crush him.

Work puts pressure on family Christmas

By PAUL WHITTAKER

THE traditional family Christmas get-together is becoming increasingly disrupted as more firms require staff to work on December 25.

A survey of 374 organisations by the recruitment firm Reed Personnel shows the number of companies opening on Christmas Day has grown by a third in the past decade, and nearly one in ten asks employees to work.

Organisations opening all hours now extend beyond hospitals, hotels, BT operator centres and media outlets to the service sector and even manufacturing. Ten years ago, no manufacturing companies in Reed's annual poll said they had Christmas Day staff. In this year's poll of the same companies, a small but significant 1 per cent said they would have at least a skeleton staff at work.

The service sector shows the biggest increase, from 6 per cent ten years ago to 8 per cent now. This is put down largely to the growth in consumer-led businesses such as 24-hour telephone banking and other all-day telephone operations. James Beckford, Professor of Sociology at the University of Warwick, said: "The traditional Christmas meal for families has been slipping for years." The trend was just another aspect of the flexibility of working patterns. "We now have so many service-type occupations which do not have large plants which have to be closed down over the holiday period, so it is therefore more profitable to keep these businesses running."

One in four firms gives bonuses for Christmas working; 2 per cent give treble time and almost 20 per cent offer days off in lieu. James Reed, chief executive of Reed Personnel, said: "More people are working on Christmas Day than in the past. Consumer demand seems to be creating a 24-hour society."

□ The Times will be published on Boxing Day.

For a faster Scotch, add a pinch of salt

By NIGEL HAWKES, SCIENCE EDITOR

SCIENTISTS in Scotland have found how to make whisky mature more quickly, using a pinch of salt and a large roaster.

Whiskies get a lot of their flavours from the oak casks in which they mature. Lignin and hemicellulose from the wood impart flavour and colour to the whisky, while tannins also seep in.

The process is long, which is why whisky must be matured for a minimum of three years. Most of the substances are removed from the surface of the wood, by the process, so

before a cask can be reused it has to be scraped to expose fresh wood, and then flamed to break down the lignin and hemicellulose, as well as creating a charred layer to filter out unwanted flavours.

Scientists at the Scotch Whisky Research Institute in Edinburgh have improved the method for preconditioning the casks. By pressing a mixture of salts - mainly table salt - into the barrel's staves and heating them under an electric burner, they can produce barrels which mature whisky more quickly.

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Pop-out long hair trimmer.
Model 2000.
CURRYS PRICE
£24.99

PHILISHAVE
Electric shaver
2 rotary shaving heads.
25 minutes cordless shaving.
Model 1000.
CURRYS PRICE
£16.99

BRAUN
Electric shaver
1 hour fast charge.
Pop-out long hair trimmer.
Model 2000.
CURRYS PRICE
£25.99

HITACHI
Electric shaver
2 rotary shaving heads.
25 minutes cordless shaving.
Model 1000.
CURRYS PRICE
£20.99

REMINGTON
Electric shaver
1 hour fast charge.
Pop-out long hair trimmer.
Model 2000.
CURRYS PRICE
£26.99

PHILISHAVE
Electric shaver
2 rotary shaving heads.
25 minutes cordless shaving.
Model 1000.
CURRYS PRICE
£17.99

BRAUN
Electric shaver
1 hour fast charge.
Pop-out long hair trimmer.
Model 2000.
CURRYS PRICE
£27.99

HITACHI
Electric shaver
2 rotary shaving heads.
25 minutes cordless shaving.
Model 1000.
CURRYS PRICE
£21.99

REMINGTON
Electric shaver
1 hour fast charge.
Pop-out long hair trimmer.
Model 2000.
CURRYS PRICE
£28.99

PHILISHAVE
Electric shaver
2 rotary shaving heads.
25 minutes cordless shaving.
Model 1000.
CURRYS PRICE
£18.99

BRAUN
Electric shaver
1 hour fast charge.
Pop-out long hair trimmer.
Model 2000.
CURRYS PRICE
£29.99

HITACHI
Electric shaver
2 rotary shaving heads.
25 minutes cordless shaving.
Model 1000.
CURRYS PRICE
£22.99

REMINGTON
Electric shaver
1 hour fast charge.
Pop-out long hair trimmer.
Model 2000.
CURRYS PRICE
£30.99

PHILISHAVE
Electric shaver
2 rotary shaving heads.
25 minutes cordless shaving.
Model 1000.
CURRYS PRICE
£19.99

BRAUN
Electric shaver
1 hour fast charge.
Pop-out long hair trimmer.
Model 2000.
CURRYS PRICE
£31.99

HITACHI
Electric shaver
2 rotary shaving heads.
25 minutes cordless shaving.
Model 1000.
CURRYS PRICE
£23.99

REMINGTON
Electric shaver
1 hour fast charge.
Pop-out long hair trimmer.
Model 2000.
CURRYS PRICE
£32.99

PHILISHAVE
Electric shaver
2 rotary shaving heads.
25 minutes cordless shaving.
Model 1000.
CURRYS PRICE
£20.99

BRAUN
Electric shaver
1 hour fast charge.
Pop-out long hair trimmer.
Model 2000.
CURRYS PRICE
£33.99

HITACHI
Electric shaver
2 rotary shaving heads.
25 minutes cordless shaving.
Model 1000.
CURRYS PRICE
£24.99

REMINGTON
Electric shaver
1 hour fast charge.
Pop-out long hair trimmer.
Model 2000.
CURRYS PRICE
£34.99

PHILISHAVE
Electric shaver
2 rotary shaving heads.
25 minutes cordless shaving.
Model 1000.
CURRYS PRICE
£21.99

BRAUN
Electric shaver
1 hour fast charge.
Pop-out long hair trimmer.
Model 2000.
CURRYS PRICE
£35.99

HITACHI
Electric shaver
2 rotary shaving heads.
25 minutes cordless shaving.
Model 1000.
CURRYS PRICE
£25.99

REMINGTON
Electric shaver
1 hour fast charge.
Pop-out long hair trimmer.
Model 2000.
CURRYS PRICE
£36.99

PHILISHAVE
Electric shaver
2 rotary shaving heads.
25 minutes cordless shaving.
Model 1000.
CURRYS PRICE
£22.99

BRAUN
Electric shaver
1 hour fast charge.
Pop-out long hair trimmer.
Model 2000.
CURRYS PRICE
£37.99

HITACHI
Electric shaver
2 rotary shaving heads.
25 minutes cordless shaving.
Model 1000.
CURRYS PRICE
£26.99

REMINGTON
Electric shaver
1 hour fast charge.
Pop-out long hair trimmer.
Model 2000.
CURRYS PRICE
£38.99

PHILISHAVE
Electric shaver
2 rotary shaving heads.
25 minutes cordless shaving.
Model 1000.
CURRYS PRICE
£23.99

BRAUN
Electric shaver
1 hour fast charge.
Pop-out long hair trimmer.
Model 2000.
CURRYS PRICE
£39.99

HITACHI
Electric shaver
2 rotary shaving heads.
25 minutes cordless shaving.
Model 1000.
CURRYS PRICE
£27.99

REMINGTON
Electric shaver
1 hour fast charge.
Pop-out long hair trimmer.
Model 2000.
CURRYS PRICE
£40.99

PHILISHAVE
Electric shaver
2 rotary shaving heads.
25 minutes cordless shaving.
Model 1000.
CURRYS PRICE
£24.99

BRAUN
Electric shaver
1 hour fast charge.
Pop-out long hair trimmer.
Model 2000.
CURRYS PRICE
£41.99

HITACHI
Electric shaver
2 rotary shaving heads.
25 minutes cordless shaving.
Model 1000.
CURRYS PRICE
£28.99

REMINGTON
Electric shaver
1 hour fast charge.
Pop-out long hair trimmer.
Model 2000.
CURRYS PRICE
£42.99

PHILISHAVE
Electric shaver
2 rotary shaving heads.
25 minutes cordless shaving.
Model 1000.
CURRYS PRICE
£25.99

BRAUN
Electric shaver
1 hour fast charge.
Pop-out long hair trimmer.
Model 2000.
CURRYS PRICE
£43.99

HITACHI
Electric shaver
2 rotary shaving heads.
25 minutes cordless shaving.
Model 1000.
CURRYS PRICE
£29.99

REMINGTON
Electric shaver
1 hour fast charge.
Pop-out long hair trimmer.
Model 2000.
CURRYS PRICE
£44.99

PHILISHAVE
Electric shaver
2 rotary shaving heads.
25 minutes cordless shaving.
Model 1000.
CURRYS PRICE
£26.99

BRAUN
Electric shaver
1 hour fast charge.
Pop-out long hair trimmer.
Model 2000.
CURRYS PRICE
£45.99

HITACHI
Electric shaver
2 rotary shaving heads.
25 minutes cordless shaving.
Model 1000.
CURRYS PRICE
£30.99

REMINGTON
Electric shaver
1 hour fast charge.
Pop-out long hair trimmer.
Model 2000.
CURRYS PRICE
£46.99

PHILISHAVE
Electric shaver
2 rotary shaving heads.
25 minutes cordless shaving.
Model 1000.
CURRYS PRICE
£27.99

BRAUN
Electric shaver
1 hour fast charge.
Pop-out long hair trimmer.
Model 2000.
CURRYS PRICE
£47.99

HITACHI
Electric shaver
2 rotary shaving heads.
25 minutes cordless shaving.
Model 1000.
CURRYS PRICE
£31.99

REMINGTON
Electric shaver
1 hour fast charge.
Pop-out long hair trimmer.
Model 2000.
CURRYS PRICE
£48.99

PHILISHAVE
Electric shaver
2 rotary shaving heads.
25 minutes cordless shaving.
Model 1000.
CURRYS PRICE
£28.99

BRAUN
Electric shaver
1 hour fast charge.
Pop-out long hair trimmer.
Model 2000.
CURRYS PRICE
£49.99

HITACHI
Electric shaver
2 rotary shaving heads.
25 minutes cordless shaving.
Model 1000.
CURRYS PRICE
£32.99

REMINGTON
Electric shaver
1 hour fast charge.
Pop-out long hair trimmer.
Model 2000.
CURRYS PRICE
£50.99

PHILISHAVE
Electric shaver
2 rotary shaving heads.
25 minutes cordless shaving.
Model 1000.
CURRYS PRICE
£29.99

BRAUN
Electric shaver
1 hour fast charge.
Pop-out long hair trimmer.
Model 2000.
CURRYS PRICE
£51.99

HITACHI
Electric shaver
2 rotary shaving heads.
25 minutes cordless shaving.
Model 1000.
CURRYS PRICE
£33.99

REMINGTON
Electric shaver
1 hour fast charge.
Pop-out long hair trimmer.
Model 2000.
CURRYS PRICE
£52.99

PHILISHAVE
Electric shaver
2 rotary shaving heads.
25 minutes cordless shaving.
Model 1000.
CURRYS PRICE
£30.99

BRAUN
Electric shaver
1 hour fast charge.
Pop-out long hair trimmer.
Model 2000.
CURRYS PRICE
£53.99

HITACHI
Electric shaver
2 rotary shaving heads.
25 minutes cordless shaving.
Model 1000.
CURRYS PRICE
£34.99

REMINGTON
Electric shaver
1 hour fast charge.
Pop-out long hair trimmer.
Model 2000.
CURRYS PRICE
£54.99

PHILISHAVE
Electric shaver
2 rotary shaving heads.
25 minutes cordless shaving.
Model 1000.
CURRYS PRICE
£31.99

BRAUN
Electric shaver
1 hour fast charge.
Pop-out long hair trimmer.
Model 2000.
CURRYS PRICE
£55.99

HITACHI
Electric shaver
2 rotary shaving heads.
25 minutes cordless shaving.
Model 1000.
CURRYS PRICE
£35.99

REMINGTON
Electric shaver
1 hour fast charge.
Pop-out long hair trimmer.
Model 2000.
CURRYS PRICE
£56.99

PHILISHAVE
Electric shaver
2 rotary shaving heads.
25 minutes cordless shaving.
Model 1000.
CURRYS PRICE
£32.99

BRAUN
Electric shaver
1 hour fast charge.
Pop-out long hair trimmer.
Model 2000.
CURRYS PRICE
£57.99

HITACHI
Electric shaver
2 rotary shaving heads.
25 minutes cordless shaving.
Model 1000.
CURRYS PRICE
£36.99

REMINGTON
Electric shaver
1 hour fast charge.
Pop-out long hair trimmer.
Model 2000.
CURRYS PRICE
£58.99

PHILISHAVE
Electric shaver
2 rotary shaving heads.
25 minutes cordless shaving.
Model 1000.
CURRYS PRICE
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BRAUN
Electric shaver
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Tories agree to open the books on party funding

THE Tories agreed yesterday to reveal details of their accounts to a party funding inquiry after the anonymity of their donors was guaranteed.

Tory finance chiefs will be required to categorise the party's benefactors, saying whether sums of money given over the past five years came from individuals, companies, pressure groups or other types of organisation. But the precise amounts given by controversial donors such as Asil Nadir, who jumped bail for alleged fraud, will remain confidential.

William Hague, the Tory leader, told MPs that his party would co-operate with requests from Lord Neill of Bladen, the public standards watchdog, to provide his committee with details of the party's annual income — including donations, subscriptions and membership fees — since 1992. Mr Hague had previously turned down a similar request from Tony Blair because there was no guarantee of anonymity for individual donors.

Lord Neill, who published a discussion document on his inquiry yesterday, said that it was important to find out

Figures will be disclosed but the names will stay secret, reports

Valerie Elliott

about the nature of party funding, rather than get caught up in wrangles with parties about the identities of individual donors.

All political parties have been asked to reveal the size of their donations. Sums over £5,000 must be disclosed in bands of £5,000-£10,000, £10,000-£20,000, £20,000-£30,000 and so on up to £100,000. Donations above that figure will be disclosed in bands of £100,000.

At a press conference, Lord Neill said: "I hope that the parties will be able to give us these sort of ball park figures fairly quickly without breaching any confidences which they may in the past have offered to donors."

Richard Horsman, secretary to the Neill Committee on

Standards in Public Life, has written to party treasurers asking them also to provide details of any favourable guarantees and loans below commercial rates, and any other services supplied to a value above £5,000. He also warned them that the information would eventually be published by the committee.

Lord Neill wants the information before the end of February and is anxious to open up the debate on party funding to include rank-and-file party members. An advertisement inviting members of the public to "have their say" is to appear in national newspapers shortly.

Mr Horsman's letter to the parties says: "The committee does not believe it is essential to have full details of the accounts of all parties for past years. But it would be helpful to have a broad indication of the nature of the sources and the scale of the funding of your party in the last few years."

Lord Neill's discussion document outlines the main issues for his inquiry, including the perceived link between political patronage and the honours system; the future of "blind trusts"; state funding; a



cap on election spending; and the accountability of parties.

He hopes to influence the legislation proposed by Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, to ban foreign donations to any British political party and to reveal identity of any donors who give more than £5,000. The Neill Committee will make any suggestions for the Bill before its report on political funding, which will be published by the summer.

Lord Neill said he believed

that he had to make a judgment on the merits for or against state funding in his report, and would therefore be visiting Sweden, Germany and Canada to examine their state funding systems.

In the document, Lord Neill asks about the relationships between donations and possible conflicts of interest — a clear reference to the row over the decision to support an exemption for Formula One from the ban on tobacco

sponsorship of sport. He also questions the use of personal political funds including "blind trusts", which were used in Opposition by Mr Blair and some of his senior colleagues. He asks what rules should apply to them and whether a blind trust for donations obviates any conflict of interest or creates significant drawbacks.

The committee intends to hold public hearings on the subject of its inquiry during

April and May at venues in London, Glasgow, Cardiff and Belfast.

The new members of the Neill committee were announced yesterday. They are the Tory MP and former minister John MacGregor; Lord Goodhart, QC, the businessman and Liberal Democrat peer Sir Anthony Cleaver; and Frances Heaton, a former civil servant who is a director of the Bank of England and of Lazard Brothers.

MPs will scrutinise royal accounts

By Valerie Elliott
Whitehall Editor

TONY BLAIR is to give MPs the right to scrutinise the £40 million in taxpayers' money paid to the Royal Family each year after the disclosure yesterday that some staff have been paying as little as £45 a week to live in a palace.

The opening of the royal accounts to Parliament is to be announced in the new year when the Treasury responds to the demand from MPs on the Public Accounts Committee to give access to the public spending watchdog, the National Audit Office.

MPs will then be able to find out the scale of accommodation available to royal staff and pensioners and the rents they pay. MPs also wish to know the duties of staff who are entitled to live in "grace and favour" accommodation.

The figures in the Public Accounts Committee's report are two years old. Many of the rents that were £45 a week then have increased to more than £70 a week today. They are mainly paid by maids, butlers and other housekeeping staff for one room. All staff have to pay council tax, utility bills and maintenance costs and some pay tax on the perk of job-related accommodation.

It is understood that Sir John Bourn, the Comptroller and Auditor-General, will be given access to accounts on the royal family's £19.5 million costs on transport for official duties; the £16.4 million spent on the running of occupied royal palaces; and £7.9 million paid under the Civil List.

IN PARLIAMENT

TODAY in the Commons: Trade and Industry questions; Public Prosecutions (Northern Ireland) Bill, second reading; short debate on hospital services in Brentwood and Orpington; in the Lords: Lottery and Criminal Justice (Northern Ireland) Order, debate on free access to public museums and galleries.

Neill should avoid straying into political areas

THE Neill Committee on Standards in Public Life is asking the right questions about party funding. But the consultative paper issued yesterday underlines how hard it will be to produce answers which command cross-party support. As Lord Neill of Bladen admitted, the committee has so far concentrated on broadly ethical questions of standards of conduct. But, now, it is being asked to reach judgments in highly political areas.

The committee's paper poses 39 questions, ranging from donations, through openness, the honours system, state funding and regulation, limits on expenditure, the implications of the European Convention on Human Rights to referendums. There are no

simple solutions. For instance, "if party expenditure were restricted, should measures be taken to restrict election spending by other organisations? Would a restriction be an unacceptable fetter on freedom of speech?" If there was state funding, how should it be calculated and to whom should it go, and for what activities?

The Government has proposed to ban foreign donations and to require disclosure of the names of donors of more than £5,000. But, as the report asks, how should a "foreign" donation be defined? "Is it improper for political parties to accept donations from foreign individuals domiciled here or from UK subsidiaries of foreign-owned companies?" How can wealthy individuals

RIDDELL ON POLITICS

be prevented from splitting big donations into amounts of just under the £5,000 disclosure limit?

The real difficulty is the absence of agreement on the nature of the problem. Some are concerned about the lack of transparency and the risks of big donors buying secret access and influence. Others argue that one party, the Tories, has been able to raise much more money and have enjoyed an unfair advantage in elections. I have always been sceptical of the financial explanation of election results. Total spending in British elections is not large by international or historical standards. Expenses in the 1890 election

(when there was virtually no national campaign) was more than double in real terms the amount spent by all parties in this year's campaign.

As long as the purchase by parties of television and radio time remains banned (as it should be), British campaigns are never going to be that expensive. There is no case for unconditional taxpayer funding, though state support for the work of Opposition parties in Parliament should be extended — not least to avoid the type of blind trust which Tony Blair set up in Opposition. Limits on national spending and donations are fraught with difficulties, as the American experience of wide-

spread evasion underlines.

Instead, the Neill committee should focus on openness and the regulation of parties and elections. As the Bernie Ecclestone affair showed, there is a difference of kind between giving £100 and £1 million. The former should be private, while the latter should be disclosed, to deal with worries over influence peddling and the purchase of honours. The rules would have to be broadly defined to

include front organisations trying to influence elections.

Election law also needs to be updated. For a century, it has focused on local candidates and constituency activities, virtually ignoring the existence of national parties or campaigns. This is anyway going to have to change with the registration of parties for the next European elections. There should, in addition, be an election commission to supervise boundary reviews,

the rules governing elections, registration, the activities of returning officers and greater financial disclosure by parties. That is a big enough agenda for the Neill committee. It may also be able to clarify the options on state funding and campaign limits, but it should not try to make recommendations on issues which are inherently political, where the parties are bound to disagree.

PETER RIDDELL

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Prescott gets cooking underneath the arches

BY MARK HENDERSON

IT MIGHT not have matched the haute cuisine he once served on Cunard liners, but John Prescott did not seem to mind as he dished out breakfast to homeless youngsters at the new winter shelter in Admiralty Arch yesterday.

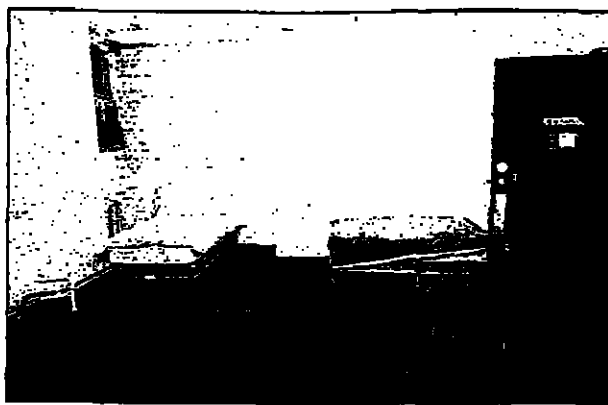
Arriving to open it from a near-blizzard in The Mall, the Deputy Prime Minister donned an apron and chucked with volunteers as he cooked up eggs, on fried bread, bacon and tomatoes for the homeless 16 to 25-year-olds who will stay at the listed London landmark until March, thanks to the Government's winter shelter programme.

The menu was a bit more extensive on the Cunard, but I'm as delighted to be serving eggs on fried bread that I've cooked myself as serving more exotic fare on the cruise liners," Mr Prescott said.

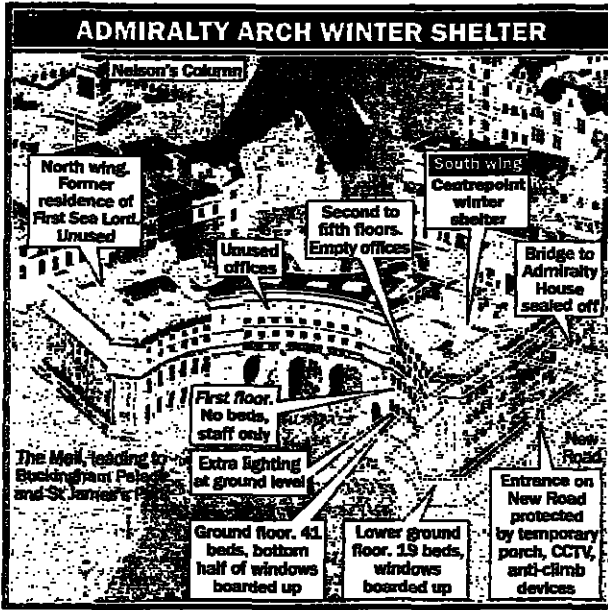
Stephen Ross, 20, originally from Edinburgh, seemed just as delighted as he tucked into his ministerial fry-up. Twenty homeless people moved into the Grade I listed building earlier this week and 60 will stay in the shelter, run by the charity Centrepoin, when it fills to capacity as temperatures drop.

The Government estimates that 500 homeless people will sleep rough regularly in London this winter and as many beds will be available in emergency shelters in the capital. There are also government-assisted hostels in Cambridge and Bristol.

The shelter's neighbours include Admiralty House, where several Cabinet ministers, including Mr Prescott, have flats, the Ugandan Embassy, government buildings on Whitehall and, a few hundred yards along The



A simply furnished bedroom at a prestigious address



Mall, the Queen at Buckingham Palace.

"There are a number of prestigious neighbours, so it's an appropriate statement at this time of the year," Mr Prescott said. "It makes me smile when the admirals are coming out and the lower orders come in and, as I am of

the lower orders myself, I see that with some relief."

The arch, which housed the official residence of the First Sea Lord until earlier this year, has been largely unoccupied since the Navy moved its offices in 1994. It was designed by Sir Aston Webb in 1904 after an architectural competi-

tion, as part of the procession route dedicated to the memory of Queen Victoria, and was completed in 1911.

The Property Advisers to the Civil Estate, which own the building, offered it to Centrepoin as part of the £4 million winter shelters programme in October, and Westminster council granted planning permission late last month. Residents will use the ground and lower ground floors of the south wing, and 300 are expected to sleep there before it shuts in March.

Most will gain access through referral agencies, but there will be emergency drop-in beds, particularly in cold weather. Victor Adebawale, chief executive of Centrepoin, said the charity was pleased to have use of such an appropriate building. "It's going to be a wonderful location, right next to the Strand, where young people can be found sleeping rough every night."

Residents said they were relieved to get into the shelter now that temperatures were falling. "I am glad to be in here rather than on the streets. Who wouldn't be?" Mr Ross said. "But I want to get a more permanent home, not just three weeks here and two months there."

Jason Bernier, originally from Peckham, southeast London, had slept rough for four months. "I think I should have a fairly good Christmas now that I'm in here," he said. "If this place wasn't open I would probably spend Christmas Eve in a hotel doorway."

The charity approached the Government for use of the arch when a volunteer, Brigadier Chris Dick, came up with the idea after cycling past the empty building.

Residents will have access 24 hours a day, with a cooked



John Prescott provides a ministerial fry-up for the homeless at Admiralty Arch

breakfast and dinner and a sandwich lunch. A laundry is provided, as are showers and lavatories. A mix of shared and single bedrooms will be split between 40 men and 20 women, the usual ratio among rough sleepers.

A Centrepoin mental health practitioner will assess

residents as they arrive. Alcohol and drugs are banned from the hostel, though habitual users will be admitted if their behaviour remains "within acceptable limits". Drugs projects, counselling services and an optician will visit.

Two resettlement workers

will be attached to Admiralty Arch and every resident will receive housing advice. Streets Ahead, the homeless employment agency, will also have a base in the hostel and full details of the Government's welfare-to-work scheme, which begins in April, will be given to residents.

Grotto dwarves pay their debt to society

BY PAUL WILKINSON

A GROUP of offenders are paying their debt to society by putting on white beards and dwarf costumes to help Santa to hand out presents to children in a Christmas grotto.

The offenders are taking part in a community service scheme being staged for the benefit of disadvantaged children on a canal near Mirfield, West Yorkshire.

The project, created by the West Yorkshire Probation Service, is believed to be the only Community Service Order scheme of its kind in Britain. Normally offenders would be painting church halls, repairing furniture for poor families or fitting security locks.

Instead they are working on the floating grotto on a canal narrowboat moored at Shepley Bridge Marina. There they are dispensing Christmas cheer to about 150 special-needs children who will visit them during the next week. The eight offenders include teenage car thieves and a shop manager convicted of drink-driving.

Santa, alias Brian Jennings, a retired community service officer, said: "They work really hard at bringing a smile to the kids' faces and I think the work is very rewarding."

Margaret Fox, a community service officer for Kirkstall district, said: "They have an option to come on this scheme or not, but they must dress up and I know they get some stick off their mates in the pub, but they don't seem to mind."

"It is nice for people to see the happier side of what offenders can do on community service. They hand out gifts donated by the Sunshine Variety Club and West Yorkshire Police. All the offenders are obviously carefully vetted."

None of the dwarves wanted to be identified, but one dressed as Dopey said: "We know we have done something wrong, but this is a nice way to pay for it at Christmas time. We have a good laugh together and it is a joy to help bring a bit of magic to the children."

Another helper, who answered only to the name Sleepy, added: "We all think it is a good idea and a useful way of keeping us busy. Being Santa's dwarf is not a soft option, even though some people might see it that way."

Pastor shatters pupils' faith in Father Christmas

BY JOANNA BALE

THE children sat in expectant silence, waiting for the Rev Mark Woods to address their morning assembly and impart a few uplifting words.

Little did the pupils of Alvechurch Church of England Middle School realise that he was about to destroy the innocence of childhood. For Mr Woods, warming to his theme of "the things we leave behind us when we grow up", told them that Father Christmas did not exist. Instead he told them to believe in Jesus.

Several of the children, aged nine to 13, went home in tears after the Baptist minister's forthrightly address to the school in Hereford and Worcester. Two parents tele-

phoned the minister to complain and several contacted the head teacher.

Afterwards Mr Woods, who has two sons aged two and three, said he was upset that his comments had shocked some of the younger pupils, who had still believed in Father Christmas.

"If I had known then, I would have changed what I was going to say. I had the distinct impression at the beginning of the assembly that they didn't believe in Santa Claus and I thought children of nine wouldn't believe any more."

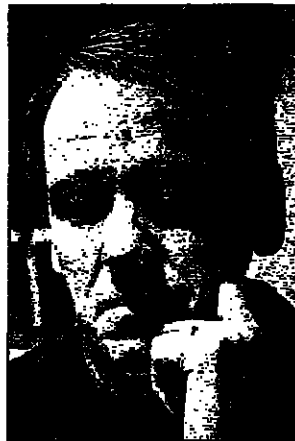
Before I started the assembly I asked all the children who believed in Father Christmas to put up their arms. A



Judith Harkus-Jeffries complained that her son, Luke, was upset by Mr Woods, right

few of the older ones did and a number of the younger ones. I thought the older ones were joking, and if there had been a

forest of arms from the rest I wouldn't have gone any further. But I honestly thought in this day and age that kids as



young as seven or eight knew the truth about Santa Claus. Obviously I was wrong. "I found out when I was

about seven. I wouldn't say the nine-year-olds at the school who didn't know have led a sheltered life, but they would have found out sooner or later. But I admit it wasn't my place to tell them and I hope I haven't ruined their Christmas. If I have, then I am very, very sorry."

Mr Woods said that, as an example of the things we leave behind us when we grow up, he had told the 100 children that he did not believe in Father Christmas any longer.

But the news was a bitter blow to some of the younger children, including Luke Harkus-Jeffries, nine, who was convinced until then that Father Christmas was real. His mother, Judith Harkus-Jeffries, of Alvechurch, said

that she had been shocked when her son told her what had happened.

"He said Mr Woods said he wanted to tell them the true meaning of Christmas - that Jesus was the true meaning of Christmas and Father Christmas was made up just like the tooth fairy," she said.

"I said he shouldn't have said that because he might have upset some children, and Luke said: 'I was upset'."

Mrs Harkus-Jeffries complained to the school but said there was little she could do to rectify the situation.

"I decided not to say anything to him because I just don't know what to say. The fact that it's come from an adult and someone he looks up to just makes it more difficult."

Christmas Day
25
December

"Thanks ever so much for the jumper..."

Boxing Day
26
December

"No, really, I do like it, honest..."

New Year's Day
1
January

"So you're sure I don't need a receipt?"

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Moral crusader casts a calculating eye on White House prospects



Bauer: his heroes include Reagan and Lady Thatcher

Gary Bauer is unruffled that his office, on the fringes of Washington's desolate wasteland north of the Capitol, is surrounded by four fire engines. Ignoring an offstage drama of a perilously dangling window-cleaner, he launches into his favourite argument that the next occupant of the White House should be someone who tackles the "virtue deficit" in American life.

It is idealistic leadership, not the niceties of fiscal policy, which is most important, he says. "The Pope, Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher have changed the course of history."

The question is whether his unabashed moral crusade, and undispensed focus and concentration, can now bring Mr Bauer from the backwa-



AMERICAN AGENDA
BRONWEN MADDOX

ters to the mainstream of politics. Mr Bauer, 51, who advised President Reagan for eight years, has been ubiquitous in Washington life for two decades. But as head of the Family Research Council, a think-tank-cum-lobby group

promoting moral and family issues, he has emerged as one of the most influential spokesmen for social conservatives.

Suddenly he is flavour of the month. After a year so barren of politics it is now dubbed Year of the Dog (President Clinton's dog, that is, now formally christened Buddy), both parties are scrambling for ideas. This week the *Weekly Standard* put him on the cover under the headline "Bauer Power: Washington's Most Formidable Conservative", while the *National Review* devoted its political column to speculation that he might run for President in 2000.

Mr Bauer grew up in Newport, Kentucky, in a Democratic family within a Democratic district. His conversion came aged 17, when

he teamed up with Republican businessmen in an attempt to elect a new sheriff and rid the city of organised crime. Their candidate was defeated when found in bed with a prostitute, but Mr Bauer claims "he was kidnapped and drugged and propped up in bed with her". After this skulduggery was exposed, he says, their candidate won the next election.

With less drama, he has since fashioned himself into a model of the bright, articulate "communicator" with a solid hairline and a good handshake for whom Washington is a magnet. Most become lawyers; those like Mr Bauer who have found their cause must then grapple with turning their skill into real power.

The national spotlight swung onto him this year when he struck a series of unexpected alliances to promote his beliefs. He stood with Richard Gere to protest against President Jiang Zemin's visit. He joined with the unions in an unsuccessful bid to block renewal of China's "most favoured nation" trading status. He is as "troubled" as liberals by welfare reforms forcing single mothers with young children out to work. Although he supports Republican tax-cutting plans, he worries that they favour businesses more than families.

In many eyes, his performance this year eclipsed that of the Christian Coalition, less confident since the departure of its leader Ralph Reed and since "Religious Right" ac-

quired pejorative overtones. Mr Bauer's political action committee, started in February, has raised \$2.2 million (£1.3 million), which it is doling out for local elections.

He does not dismiss talk of presidential ambitions. "I want certain ideas to run, and I'm hoping that some logical, viable, political figure — a senator or governor — will embrace them," he says. "But if no one does that, I feel an obligation to pray about whether this is something I ought to do."

It does, though, seem unlikely that he could make the White House. His beliefs fall between too many stools to lend themselves conveniently to the party packaging of the campaign trail. Many of his

favourite causes, such as mending the "broken hearts and broken psyches" of the 1960s sexual revolution, may strike a chord in Middle America, but require little from central government. Not least, he may be too short for popular taste, at several inches over 5ft. Lack of height is not an automatic bar to the presidency — the shortest was James Madison, who at 5ft 4in weighed less than 100lb — but it does not help.

It is possible that he would succeed in the next few years to be a vice-presidential running-mate. But most likely he will remain what he is now: one of the nation's best moral lobbyists, and a potentially decisive factor in determining which of his Republican colleagues is picked to run for the White House.



Lisa Hathaway with daughter Jasmine, three, after hearing of Jessica's death

Mothers feud over legacy of dead child pilot

FROM GILES WHITTELL IN LOS ANGELES

NEARLY two years after her death, the little girl who wanted to be the youngest pilot to fly across America is at the centre of an ugly court-battle between her mother and stepmother over \$3 million (£1.3 million) of life insurance.

Lisa Hathaway, whose seven-year-old daughter, Jessica Dubroff, died while trying to

take off from a remote Wyoming airfield, is being sued by the widow of Jessica's father for nearly \$1 million. The case has gone to trial in California, where Ms Hathaway's lawyer said that it was "simply about greed".

Months before her doomed flight, Jessica's father, Lloyd Dubroff, bought four life insurance policies each worth

\$750,000. His death, along with his daughter and her flight instructor in the cockpit of an over-laden single-engine aircraft, triggered national soul-searching and a bitter row over his estate.

His then wife, Melinda Hurst Dubroff, was named as beneficiary of two of the insurance policies. She is now suing for half the proceeds of

the other two as well, even though they were made out in the name of Ms Hathaway, the mother of Mr Dubroff's three eldest children.

Mrs Dubroff is also claiming gifts and property worth \$150,000 that her husband gave Ms Hathaway in the final years of his life.

The widow's claims are based on a "community prop-

erty interest" that gives her half Mr Dubroff's estate under Californian marriage laws. However, her legal wrangling could not contrast more starkly with the New Age spirituality that defined Jessica's brief life.

Raised in what friends described as unconventional bliss, Jessica was a vegetarian, never went to school, had no

toys and watched no television at home. Instead she enjoyed "home schooling", private riding and music lessons, and an early introduction to flying.

Her attempt to fly coast-to-coast across America in April 1996 was strongly encouraged by both parents. Jessica left Half Moon Bay, near San Francisco, with her 52-year-old instructor in the co-pilot's

seat of a rented Cessna after logging only 35 hours in the air. The plane crashed a day later, seconds after trying to take off from Cheyenne's airport in an icy rainstorm. Investigators concluded the aircraft was probably overloaded and should never have tried to take off.

Mrs Dubroff's lawsuit is the latest in a series of three. Ms

Hathaway, who calls herself a spiritual healer, opened the hostilities by suing for \$1.5 million in child support last year. Another suit accusing Cessna and the flight instructor, Joe Reid, of negligence, remains unresolved.

Ms Hathaway is also trying to repeal a federal law passed after Jessica's death banning under-age competitive flying.



Jessica Dubroff in the Cessna at Half Moon Bay airport near San Francisco at the start of her ill-fated attempt to fly coast-to-coast last April

Model returns millionaire's ring

FROM JAMES BONE IN NEW YORK

THE Latvian starlet sued for the return of \$50,000 (£30,000) in gifts by a jilted Wall Street trader has settled the case by handing back her nine-carat diamond ring, but will keep his other presents.

Ines Misan, a twentysomething model and aspiring actress, agreed to return the \$29,275 rock that the dotting financier, John Lattanzio, 49, claims he gave her as an engagement ring.

But the blonde gets to keep four other pieces of jewellery named in the case, worth another \$210,000 — a Cartier diamond necklace, a Van Cleef & Arpels diamond ring, a crocodile-skin purse by Hermes, and two rings from Harry

Winston. "I have a good deal and I'm very happy with it," Miss Misan said before driving off in the Mercedes given to her by her former boyfriend. "It's very sweet."

Mr Lattanzio, who lavished an estimated \$3 million on Miss Misan during their two-year affair, had gone to court to ask for the nine-carat diamond ring back under a New York law allowing the return of gifts given "in contemplation of marriage". She said he bought her the ring at Harry Winston to make up with her after a temporary separation, and that she never promised to marry him.

Although the precise terms of the settlement were confidential, sources said that Mr Lattanzio, a high-flying Wall Street trader who runs his own hedge

fund, was not concerned about money but about the engagement ring, which he considered a "love token".

The deal was believed to contain a cash payment to Miss Misan worth tens of thousands of dollars, and a promise to continue paying the rent on her family's apartment in Brooklyn.

Miss Misan will be allowed to remain in the luxury flat he bought for her for another five years, and then keep the profits from its sale.

"Everything's settled," Mr Lattanzio told a reporter before slamming the door to his house in Greenwich Village. "We made a fair agreement and we're moving on. Merry Christmas."

Grace Bradberry, page 19



Misan says she is happy with deal

Hamburger tax has its chips

FROM TOM RHODES IN WASHINGTON

BILL CLINTON's love of fast food did little for his hopes of immortality yesterday after residents in Little Rock refused an increase in the local "hamburger" tax to pay for his presidential library in the Arkansas state capital.

The local council had planned to raise taxes on hamburgers, the effective local levy for restaurants and hotels, from two to three cents to raise \$42 million (£25.8 million) for a 26-acre site chosen by the President near the city's

new River Market district. There was also a scheme to rename part of Little Rock's main thoroughfare after the man who was Governor of Arkansas for 12 years. Furious at the lack of consultation, the burghers of Little Rock complained that they had no say in either project.

The city board finally approved yesterday the use of \$15 million in bond revenues to buy the site while a further \$7.5 million will be employed to improve the Little Rock Zoo and three nearby golf courses, presumably as further encouragement to a President ob-

jected by the sport. No decision has been taken on whether Markham Street will be renamed Clinton Drive.

Jim Dailey, the Mayor, said the controversy had not been as a result of any lack of support for Mr Clinton. "We jumped out rather quickly and expanded the project without making sure the public understood just how we were going to pay for it, and raised a big stink as a result," he said.

Mr Clinton had been considering various sites for his library, but in April he chose Little Rock and last month selected the central site.

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مكتبة النخيل

ANC joy as Winnie quits race

Sam Kiley in Mafeking reports on the drama as the African queen turns defeat into a publicity victory

SNATCHING a publicity victory from the jaws of certain political defeat, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela withdrew yesterday from the race for the deputy presidency of the African National Congress, to the delight and relief of thousands of party members at their 50th national conference in Mafeking.

The former wife of President Mandela looked every bit the African queen in a richly embroidered blue kaftan dress as she marched towards the podium after being nominated for the deputy presidency by a woman delegate. She held her audience enthralled as she approached the microphone to announce whether she was going to take on the ANC's chosen candidate, Jacob Zuma.

Nelson Mandela, who resigned as party president this week, looked glum and hung his head as she kept the tension high by allowing her nomination to be seconded from delegates on the floor.

Behind her were anxious members of the national executive who had worked tirelessly most of the previous night to persuade delegates, who still supported her after the revelations at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission this month which linked her to a string of murders, to abandon her.

An electoral official asked her if she would accept the nomination. "I do not wish to cause divisions in my party," said Mrs Mandela, who has threatened to leave the ANC

and accused its leadership of plotting to suppress her. "I have not been nominated by the structures, and therefore ask my president [Thabo Mbeki] for guidance," she said.

The tension mounted still further as he explained that a nomination must be floor was nothing to do with the party structures of the ANC.

Mrs Mandela drew a deep breath. "To those comrades who nominated my name, I apologise. I have to decline," she murmured.

Wild cheers engulfed her words as she passed down the line of 30 senior members of the 60-member national executive, receiving hugs and handshakes from every one.

Basing her appeal on an image as a champion of the poor and a party outsider, she had won the only victory she could have — and avoided the humiliation of a probable defeat in a vote which would have permanently destroyed her political power base, which most analysts now believe is derived from a misperception that South Africa's poor adore her in spite of the revelations at the truth commission. Mr Mandela managed to avoid being embraced by his former wife.

His successor, Mr Mbeki, was yesterday elected unopposed, as was Jacob Zuma as the party deputy president, and Kgalema Motlanthe as secretary-general. The new ANC president told delegates that the "revolution was not over" for the party. "We still



Mrs Mandela, who pulled out of the contest, embraces Jacob Zuma after his election as ANC deputy president

have to organise ourselves to ensure we achieve the things for which our movement was established... the struggle continues," he said.

Only one slot remains to be contested now: the chairmanship, which will be decided on

a secret ballot of the 3,400 delegates. Mr Mbeki's favoured candidate, Steve Tshwete, the Sports Minister, whom Mr Mbeki has used as a trouble-shooter, most recently to attack Mrs Mandela as a "charlatan" and "coward".

Mr Tshwete is to be challenged for the post by Patrick "Terror" Lekota, the former Premier of the Free State, who was dismissed from the post earlier this year by the party's national executive.

Both are robust speakers

and popular in the party. Mr Mbeki was unable to force Mr Lekota to step down ahead of the elections, but backroom manipulation by Mr Mbeki's supporters has indicated that Mr Mbeki is likely to get his way.

WORLD IN BRIEF

Turkey threatens to end bid for EU

Ankara: Mesut Yilmaz, the Prime Minister, said yesterday Turkey would withdraw its application for European Union membership by June if it were not included in a list of candidates, the state-run Anatolian news agency said. Ankara first applied to join in 1963.

Earlier this week Mr Yilmaz vowed to freeze ties with the EU after it decided at its Luxembourg summit to exclude Turkey from its formal list of 11 future members. "We will not change our position until we are put in a basket with the 11 countries," Mr Yilmaz declared. (Reuters) Letters, page 21

Yeltsin set to resume work

Moscow: President Yeltsin will return to work next week and plans to visit India in January, the Kremlin said (Richard Besson writes). "His health is satisfactory," said Sergei Yastrzhembsky, Mr Yeltsin's spokesman. "The doctors said [on December 10] that the President would be back within ten to 12 days and he is going to be back within that time."

Homosexual grand tour

Strasbourg: A gay member of the European Parliament plans to visit EU applicant countries with his boyfriend to underline that the Union protects gays from discrimination. Peter Pex, a Dutch Christian Democrat, said homosexuality was forbidden in Cyprus and, while legal in Romania, visiting gay couples faced arrest there. (Reuters)

Sakharov prize for Algerian

Strasbourg: Salima Ghezali, an Algerian human rights campaigner, received the European Parliament's Sakharov Prize for freedom of thought, worth 15,000 euros (£10,000), and called for an international inquiry into massacres in her country. She said an inquiry could end the impunity with which both sides in Algeria blamed the other. (Reuters)

Mafia 'godmother' held

Bristol: A woman was arrested yesterday on suspicion of being the "godmother" of one of Italy's most important Mafia clans. Maria Buccarella, 42, is thought to have taken over the Sacra Corona Unita, the Mafia of the southeastern Apulia region, from her brother. She and three other women were arrested here after a four-month hunt. (AFP)

Attempt to gag dissident

Washington: The Voice of America complained of unprecedented political interference after the White House tried to block the broadcast of an interview with Wei Jingsheng, right, the Chinese dissident (Tom Rhodes writes). It was finally broadcast in China on the station's Mandarin-language television channel, but a segment was cut from a news service on Worldnet, another US government outlet.



Gay marriages rejected

Wellington: Marriage between homosexual couples is illegal, the Court of Appeal ruled to the dismay of a lesbian couple in New Zealand who brought the case. Lesbian couples vowed to keep fighting to get a Bill introduced in parliament to allow same-sex marriage. (AFP)

Seoul's thorn in the flesh stakes claim for presidency



Kim Dae-jung: a survivor

FROM NICOL DEGLI INNOCENTI IN SEOUL

SOUTH KOREANS could elect an opposition candidate as their President when they go to the polls today.

In Kim Dae-jung's case, opposition is definitely the word. The 71-year-old politician, who is running for the fourth time, has been a thorn in the side of the establishment for more than 40 years. In the days of military rule, he survived several attempts on his life: he has been kidnapped, imprisoned, condemned to death and

finally exiled. Since his return in 1985, he has been planning his peaceful assumption of power.

Whoever wins the presidency, in a country where the office carries enormous powers, must face carrying out the reforms demanded by the International Monetary Fund in exchange for a record rescue package worth \$60 billion (£36 billion).

The new President will also have to deal with the ever-present threat from North Korea, where famine and mass starvation have made the Communist regime even less predictable. Lee Hoi

Chang, a former Chief Justice, is the ruling party candidate, though he has tried to distance himself from the past by changing his name from New Korea to Grand National Party. His lead in the opinion polls was slashed when it emerged that his two sons had tampered with their medical records to escape compulsory military service.

It is such a serious matter in South Korea, troubled by the threat of invasion by the North, that one son has to return from college in the United States to be examined and weighed in public, while the other felt

a sudden urge to become a voluntary worker in a leper colony.

The third candidate, Rhee In Je, 51, gained notoriety when he left the ruling party to form his own movement, but he is not believed to command more than 15 per cent of the vote.

Mr Lee, who has been described as having the charisma of a granite statue, has tried hard to gain popularity, singing Christmas carols with his grandchildren on television. Mr Rhee has flaunted his youth and jet-black hair, but has appeared rather wooden.

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THE SUNDAY TIMES



As time goes by, we forget the creator of Casablanca... The Sunday Times Magazine on the playwright who died this year, broken-hearted

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هكذا من الأهل

Lawyer shot in row over Caribbean isle

A LONG-RUNNING dispute between a Welsh expatriate couple and the Government of Antigua and Barbuda erupted in gunfire when shots were fired in the office of the brother of the Prime Minister.

Cyril "Taffy" Bufton and his wife Bonny are fighting a government eviction order to quit the tiny Caribbean island of Guiana, which sits barely 100 yards off the coast of Antigua, where they have lived alone for 32 years.

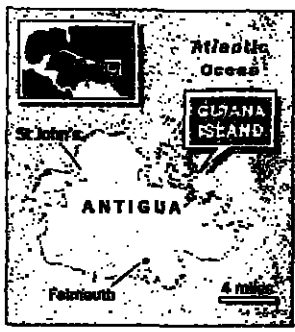
On Tuesday Mr Bufton, 73, allegedly shot his lawyer, Vere Bird Jr, 61, the Prime Minister's brother and an MP, after he voted in favour of the forced removal of the couple by police.

No one witnessed the shooting, but after the vote Mr Bufton confronted Mr Bird in his law firm offices, and allegedly shot him, wounding the lawyer in the jaw. Mr Bufton was also injured, suffering a gunshot wound to his hand.

Lester Bird, the Prime Minister, went on television on Tuesday night and blamed the incident on Antigua's political opposition and two local newspapers. He accused them of inciting the Buftons and their supporters to defy the law.

The police have not brought charges so far, but Mr Bufton, in police custody in hospital, was expected yesterday to appear before a local magistrate.

Both the injured men are being treated at the Holberton



Antigua's move to evict a Welsh couple to build a resort has led to violence, writes David Adams

Hospital in St John's, the capital. Doctors say a bullet is lodged in Mr Bird's throat, and that he will probably be flown to Miami for treatment. Mr Bufton suffered splintered bones in the palm of his left hand.

The Buftons managed Guiana for years, feeding the local deer and ducks, on behalf of its wealthy owner, a British lawyer. According to a former British diplomat who visited the couple, they lived a rustic life in a wooden house. Despite limited resources, the mechanically minded Mr Bufton kept their home running by fixing everything himself. "They managed to exist by dint of his own hands and his mechanical skills. He was a great bodger. He liked to fix things," the diplomat said.

But those who know Mr Bufton well say he could be his own worst enemy. He could be difficult, even dictatorial at times, and did not welcome visitors to the island. "Taffy is a bit of an oddball," said

Samuel Derrick, publisher of *The Observer*, an opposition newspaper in Antigua. He knows Mr Bufton well and described him as "a loner, a wilderness man". Mr Bufton would visit the mainland about once a week, hauling his jeep over the narrow stretch of water on a makeshift pontoon.

Bonny Bufton, on the other hand, seldom left the island. The few people who did visit the couple said she was always hospitable. "She's a lovely woman: very kind and loveable, and very loyal to Taffy," the diplomat said.

When the British owner of the island died some years ago, the fate of Guiana was left in dispute. The estate was sold but the Buftons clung to a five-acre property.

The long-running dispute arose after the Government entered into a contract with a Malaysian developer to build a \$300 million (£184 million) resort on Guiana. Work on the resort, a pet project of the Prime Minister who assumed

the mantle after his father, Vere Bird Sr, retired in 1994, is expected to begin next month.

The Prime Minister's brother, a former government minister who had long been at odds with his brother, had stood up for the Welsh couple, even lobbying successfully to have Mr Bufton appointed as official game warden of the 300-acre island, complete with a small salary and a government vehicle.

But when the Government asked the Buftons to leave the island, they resisted and hired Mr Bird in an attempt to claim squatters' rights. "It's unreal. One brother is trying to get him evicted, and the other brother is his lawyer," Mr Derrick said.

The Buftons have been supported in their campaign by local environmentalists fighting to stop the tourism project in order to protect the island's wildlife. Guiana is home to an important colony of 240 fallow deer, the national symbol of Antigua and Barbuda.

Tensions rose a few weeks ago when Mr Bufton ignored a police order suspending his gun licence, and ordered him to hand over firearms known to be in his possession.

Mr Bird, who is also chairman of the ruling Antigua Labour Party, was due to appear in court today to try to prevent the eviction. The climax came during a parliamentary debate on Tuesday when Mr Bird spoke up for the Buftons, but voted for a law that authorises the police to evict the couple, by force if necessary. The law also offers the Buftons alternative accommodation, a government vehicle and a compensatory stipend of \$630 (£387) a month.

"It was fairly generous. Taffy would have been fairly well looked after," said Mr Derrick. "What Taffy needs right now is some new legal representation. He has abused all the lawyers in town. We have talked to a number of lawyers this morning and no one is interested."

Mrs Bufton, reportedly, remains on Guiana, possibly unaware of the altercation between her husband and Mr Bird. But Mr Derrick said the Government was not taking any chances. "The Prime Minister said this woman is a



Bonny and Cyril Bufton are fighting their eviction; below, Vere Bird, who was shot

crackshot, so much so that the police are afraid to go over there. She has them at bay," he said.

Mr Bird Jr served in his father's Cabinet but had to leave in 1990, when a commission labelled him a conspirator in a shipment of ten tons of Israeli arms via Antigua to the Medellín drug cartel's private army in Colombia. Two years earlier, he was tainted by charges of corruption in a \$11 million deal to renovate Antigua's airport. He has maintained his innocence. Guiana is a flat piece of

scrubland off the north coast of Antigua. Those who have visited it describe it as a pristine Caribbean paradise except for the areas where the wildlife, especially the European fallow deer, have devoured the vegetation.

The only main structure on the island is a large stone house, believed to have once belonged to a sugar plantation; this has since fallen into disrepair. The island's undeveloped natural environment stands in sharp contrast to the luxury tourist resorts that dot the beaches of Antigua.

Antigua dynasty keeps grip on power

THE Bird family has controlled the Government of Antigua and Barbuda for decades through their domination of the governing party. At times they have seemed to run the islands as a fiefdom.

The towering figure of oft Sin Vere "Papa" Bird, 88, the island's first Prime Minister, founded one of the Caribbean's most pervasive dynasties. In 1994 he was succeeded as Prime Minister by his son, Lester, 59, brother of Vere Jr, the victim of Tuesday's alleged attack.

Although the family's leading members have avoided direct criticism of corruption, their paternalistic style and strong pro-business attitudes have attracted criticism within the Caribbean. Yet the stability they have brought to the country has undoubtedly allowed them to attract lucrative offshore investment and the islands are now visited by tens of thousands of British tourists every year.

Seven years ago, Vere Bird Jr was recommended to be banned for life from holding government office after an inquiry found that officials had conspired in the smuggling of Israeli arms shipments to the Medellín drugs cartel in Colombia.

Another report into the building of the V. C. Bird International airport in Antigua concluded that Mr Vere Jr, known in the island as "Runway" Bird, had acted "in a manner unbecoming a minister of government".

Further allegations of corruption have since been made involving the sale of Antiguan visas and passports to Hong Kong residents in the run-up to the handover of the colony to China. However, Lester Bird was cleared of any wrongdoing by an independent inquiry.

The United States-based human rights organisation Freedom House claimed that the February 1994 election was not free or fair, alleging that voting was not secret and that ineligible votes had been cast. Others criticised the lack of opposition access to the state-owned media.



The home of the Buftons on Guiana island, where they have lived for 32 years

Woman ahead in Guyana poll

Georgetown: Janet Jagan, a Chicago-born expatriate who made a career of fighting for Guyana's independence, held a close lead last night over the opposition leader, Desmond Hoyte, in a presidential poll.

With 134,000, or 29 per cent, of votes counted, Mrs Jagan's People's Progressive Party had 68,000 votes. Ex-President

Hoyte's People's National Congress had 61,000. Other parties split the rest.

Mrs Jagan, 77, had the support of the South American country's majority Indo-Guyanese. The 68-year-old Mr Hoyte, however, said he was confident because his party, traditionally strong among blacks and urban residents,

had made inroads among other races.

Mrs Jagan, whose Marxism made her the object of US wrath during the Cold War, was poised to become Guyana's first female leader, clinching a long political journey she shared with her husband Cheddi, who died as President in March. (AP)



A character from the Pocket Monsters programme

Japanese cartoon puts 700 in hospital

By Nick Nuttall

A JAPANESE television network yesterday called in doctors, psychologists and animation experts to find out why a cartoon triggered convulsions among hundreds of children nationwide.

Hironari Mori, programming division manager of TV Tokyo, said that more than 700 people, mainly children, were taken to hospital on Tuesday night after watching the programme, which was based on the *Pocket Monsters* video game.

The Japanese Home Affairs Ministry said that 208 people, aged from three upwards, including a man, 53, were still in hospital with epilepsy-type symptoms more than 24 hours after the broadcast.

Experts believe that the children, who reacted after an explosive scene in the cartoon was followed by five seconds of flashing lights, were photosensitive. Dr Ley Sander, a consultant neurologist at the National Hospital for Neurology in London and an adviser to the National Society for

Epilepsy, said that the chance of a television programme triggering similar seizures in Britain was almost zero.

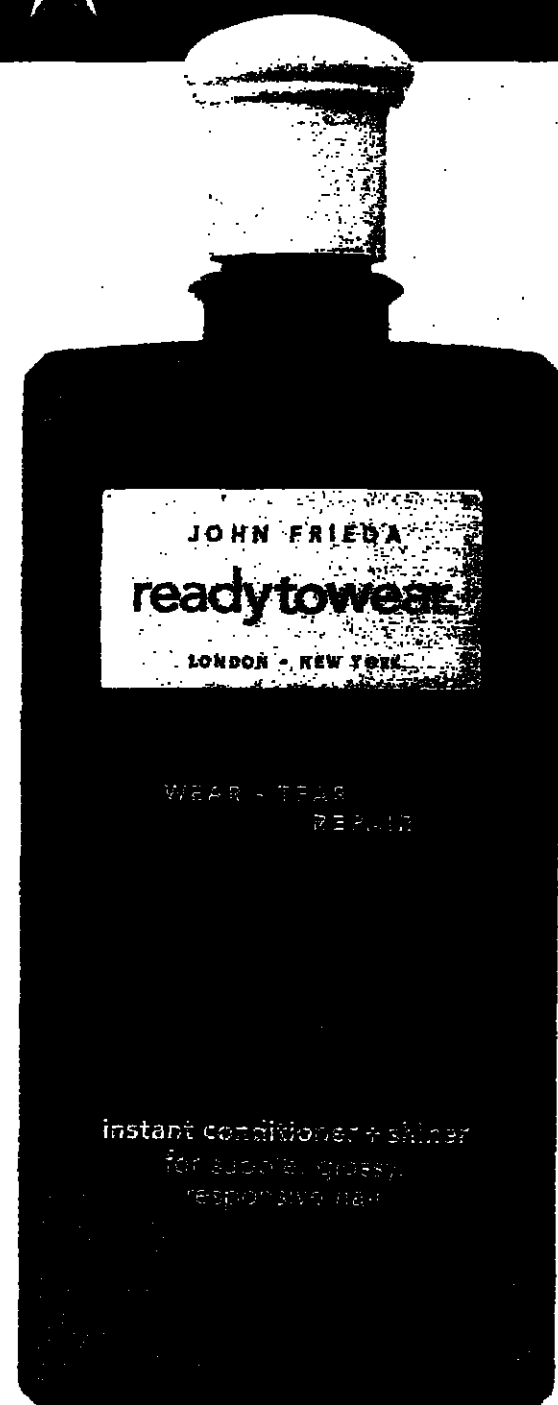
"Certain damaging, flashing frequencies, are not allowed to be broadcast in this country. They may not have the same guidelines in Japan," Dr Sander said.

Earlier this year, the Independent Television Commission banned advertisements for Boots cosmetics and Marmite gravy cubes over concern that the intensity of strobe-like images might trigger fits.

Jo Lawrence King, of the National Society for Epilepsy, said that up to 5 per cent of epileptics can have seizures brought on by flickering lights such as strobes, flickering sunlight while driving through a forest or a flashing video game.

Other children with "low thresholds" may also be vulnerable to fits if the flickering stimulus is powerful enough, even though they are not genuine epileptics.

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Which is best: burgundy or beer?



Dr Thomas Stuttford on red wine; smoking; sleeping policemen; scanners and the Two Fat Ladies

Christmas drinking is unlikely to be interrupted by thoughts of whether wine is better for the drinker's heart and health than beer, but once again this is being debated by biochemists.

It is now acknowledged by the majority of doctors that all alcoholic drinks, and even pure ethanol, inhibit platelet aggregation so that the platelets, the small particles involved in blood coagulation, do not stick together to form clots so readily in the blood vessels of the heart and brain.

A research paper written by doctors at the department of cardiology at the University of Wisconsin has recently been published in the *Journal of the American Chemical Society*. These scientists have come down heavily on the side of red wine being superior to other alcoholic drinks and support their case with laboratory experiments as well as statistics from studies in the community. Their research has shown that a blood alcohol level produced by drinking red wine need only be a tenth of that produced by other alcoholic drinks to achieve the same effect on platelet stickiness. The red wine, too, was also more efficient than other drinks in increasing the proportion of high-density lipoproteins, the good cardio-protective cholesterol, and reducing the amount of the low-density cholesterol. The advantage of red wine lies in the way it is produced, which includes using the grape skin. The grape skin contains antioxidants, phenolic flavonoids, which reduce the tendency of the blood to clot. Red wine, therefore, has two rather than one major cardio-protective constituents.

The flavonoids in red wine also help in the oxidation, the process thereby helping to prevent them from furring up the coronary arteries. The greatest concentration of the health-giving flavonoids are found on grapes grown in slightly damp climates like Burgundy, where fungus can flourish. Red wine from these districts is therefore more

health-giving than that from a sun-baked vineyard in the New World. Unfortunately, as clarets and burgundies mature some, but not all, of the flavonoid content is lost.

No sooner had the paper from Wisconsin been published than a Californian team produced equally detailed figures that although alcohol was undoubtedly beneficial, some of the apparent benefits of red wine could be the result of other factors in the wine drinker's life, and not directly as a chemical consequence.

They also concluded that both beer and wine, but not especially red wine, had advantages over other drinks. Those men who drank moderate amounts of beer, three half-pints a day, enjoyed a 30 per cent reduction in the risk of coronary heart disease: greater, they suggested, than that offered by red or white wine. Conversely, the coronary arteries of women who were wine drinkers were better protected than those who drank beer.

The advantage of red wine lies in the way it is produced

A possible cause of this discrepancy of the Californian results may be that the wines have been grown locally and do not have the same quantity of flavonoids in the skins as that drunk in Europe.

Two other research projects, while not diminishing the value of red wine, have promoted that of beer. *AIM*, a digest on research into alcohol, includes reports from the University of Munster in Germany and from the school of pharmacy at the University of Jerusalem. Both universities have studied the effect of moderate beer consumption on coronary arterial disease.

The Munster study showed that in Bavaria, a predominantly beer-drinking area, not only did the beer drinkers have a lower death rate for coronary heart disease but that the overall mortality was less. These changes applied to men and women. Interestingly, the possible use of alcohol has not extended to China. The study of 1,824 men in Shanghai showed



A few drinks the morning after can be good for the stomach and duodenum because the organism *Helicobacter pylori*, which causes peptic ulcers, is vulnerable to alcohol

those who drank up to two drinks a day had a 19 per cent reduction in the overall death rate from cancers and coronary heart disease. Those who drank up to the British guideline of four drinks a day reduced the death rate by 36 per cent, but drinking any more than this increased the death rate for strokes and some cancers. In Shanghai, the advantages were experienced whatever the drink the men chose.

Although it may not seem like it, sometimes on the morning afterwards a few drinks can be good for the stomach and duodenum. The small organism *Helicobacter pylori*, which causes peptic ulcers, is vulnerable to alcohol and, in particular, red wine. Within 15 minutes of drinking red wine, the number of *Helicobacter pylori* organisms starts shrinking. This may account for the findings of a large Danish study, which shows that a moderate intake of wine and spirits reduces the likelihood of peptic ulceration.

Cigars lead to frank diagnosis

Finding a suitable Christmas present for Frank, my 64-year-old bachelor brother, is always a problem. This year nobody will give him cigars.

Instead, he will be presented with a suitably wrapped Nicorette inhaler, the latest device, obtainable without prescription, to help people to stop smoking.

Frank, who has been smoking and inhaling more than 20 cigars a day for at least 40 years, is not so hoarse that any protests about his change in gift is unlikely to be heard.

Every case of hoarseness should be investigated if it is unexplained and lasts for more than two or three weeks. Frank, however, has been hoarse for 20 years, but a lifetime in a medical family has given him some cynicism about doctors, and he has previously rejected all suggestions for investigations.

Finally, Frank's voice became so affected that he capitulated. The

surgeon looked down his throat and saw an unpleasant-looking tumour in the larynx, but the vocal cords were working well.

The tumour, which had presumably been growing since his hoarseness began, was removed and examined by a pathologist. Fortunately, it was not as unpleasant as it looked and was a benign fibroma.

However, the cords, which looked to be suffering from no more than chronic irritation resulting from being perpetually bathed in cigar smoke, showed widespread pre-malignant changes.

The most important treatment is to stop smoking, in which case there is a chance that the cells of the cords will return to normal. Such is my brother's addiction to cigars that he cannot, and has only managed to reduce his intake to eight or ten a day.

The carcinogenic effect of tobacco smoke on the larynx is often in-

creased by drinking. Alcohol and tobacco can be a lethal combination, when drinking by itself may not be detrimental. This, however, is not my brother's problem. He is such a slight social drinker that it is sometimes necessary to blow the dust from his sherry bottle.

Nicotine inhalers may work in cases where nicotine patches, chewing gum or nasal spray have failed, as they provide many of the ritualistic features of smoking, the loss of which contributes to the difficulty that people find in giving up.

Ex-smokers miss opening the packet, the hand to mouth movements many hundreds of times a day, and the soothing dummy effect of a cigarette between the lips. The Nicorette inhaler, which retains these rituals, looks like a white cigarette holder. A cartridge containing nicotine fits

into it and as the smoker draws on the mouthpiece it delivers into the mouth about a third of the amount of nicotine normally found in a cigarette. Each time a smoker craves a cigarette he takes a pull on the holder, and the craving is relieved. People using the inhaler should not use more than 12 cartridges a day and after eight weeks it is hoped that the craving, and the smoking routine, would have gone, without any withdrawal symptoms.

Over the next two weeks the cartridge intake is halved, and then tailed off completely during the following fortnight.

Only 5 per cent of those people who are strongly addicted to tobacco are able to give up and depend on willpower alone. The Nicorette inhaler doubles this figure and is particularly useful for those who like the ritual of smoking and who have been smoking fewer than 20 cigarettes a day.

Rough ride for backs

SLEEPING policemen, the ridges installed across roads to slow down urban traffic, inevitably produce a rough ride for anyone travelling in a vehicle.

But now *Talk Back*, the magazine of the National Back Pain Association, has some advice about how drivers may reduce this jolting in order to help passengers with spinal diseases. Crossing the bumps can cause these people appreciable pain, which may persist for hours after the journey has ended.

In the article, Dr A.K. Clarke writes that this jolting can be lessened if drivers change their technique when approaching the sleeping policeman. Most people brake just before the bump, pass slowly over it, then accelerate. Braking in this way has the effect of bringing the front of the vehicle down, thereby increasing the effect of the jolt on those inside the car.

Dr Clarke suggests that the correct way is to brake some distance from the sleeping policeman and then to accelerate just as the car starts to go over the bump. Accelerating at this time lifts the front of the car, reduces the jolt, and thereby eases the pressure on the spine.

Fat and Alzheimer's

ARE the Two Fat Ladies with their delicious menus going to reduce us to dementia in old age? Their diet may have done their own grey cells little harm, but it seems that high blood cholesterol may be a factor in Alzheimer's disease. As alcohol reduces the likelihood of Alzheimer's, perhaps the wine they drink compensates for the high fat content.

Although there is a strong genetic link, environmental factors also seem to be of importance. Professor Brian Austin, of St George's Hospital, London, has demonstrated that a raised blood cholesterol may be a factor in the cause of some cases of Alzheimer's. "By adopting lifestyles known to lead to a lowering of blood cholesterol, such as regular exercise, an appropriate diet and by following outdoor pursuits, it is possible that we may be able to protect ourselves against the disease," he says.



A sleeping policeman can cause a nasty jolt to the spine

Scanners keep getting better

DORSET boasts a new county hospital in Dorchester, which serves north and west Dorset. But unfortunately it does not have an MRI scanner. When brains and spinal cords have to be visualised, abdomens checked for malignant glands, sinuses inspected, and joints examined without surgery, patients have to take a 100-mile round trip. But Dorset people are not dismayed by the absence of a scanner. Instead they have accepted the challenge and are raising funds to pay for one.

The MRI scanner has made such a difference to medicine that it is hard to remember — and perhaps better forgotten — how inaccurate many diag-

noses were before it became available.

Scanners continue to improve. The London Clinic, for instance, has recently installed a new model which gives 50 per cent greater strength. As well as doing routine work, it will enable doctors to obtain much better views of the gall bladder and pancreas as well as excellent images of the breast, so that ductal tumours may be detected.

The new scanner is no quieter than the old one and probably no less claustrophobic, but it should be remembered that most patients do not find the hammering noise frightening and do not suffer from claustrophobia.

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'We can't go on killing each other'

The brutal murder of an Israeli soldier by Hamas terrorists led his mother to embark on a mission of peace. Interview by Michael Freedland

Nachshon Wachsmann was 19, an Israeli soldier with the kind of bright smile that made people like him, when he went home for a week's leave in 1994. On October 8, the Sabbath, the army rang, telling him to attend a one-day course on operating a special tank.

"I'll be home on Sunday night," he told his mother as he left for a northern army base. Those were his last words to her. Nachshon was kidnapped by Hamas terrorists and, after five days in which he was paraded on television pleading for his life, he was killed as Israeli commander Andos attacked the house where he was being held.

"We were devastated," says Esther Wachsmann. She is a composed woman and at first glance does not seem like the typical Jewish mother, full of noisy emotion for her family. She is, of course, it is just that she separates her private grief from her public crusade. During the past three years she has travelled the world, pleading for Arabs and Jews to forge a new understanding which, she hopes, will end the brutality that led to the murder of the third of her seven sons. "We can't go on killing each other," she says.

A small, warm and bespectacled woman of 49, she still has a distinct New York accent (although it is 27 years since she lived in America). She does not wear make-up and always

wears a hat. She looks and sounds like a thousand other Orthodox Jewish women who believe they must hold on to land no matter what the cost in human lives. The stark difference in her perspective emerges only as she describes the last days of Nachshon's life and explains the mission that

'He was killed at the very hour the ultimatum expired'

is taking her to speaking engagements with Jewish and non-Jewish organisations.

Nachshon was hitch-hiking when a group of bearded men wearing skullcaps offered him a lift. Assuming them to be Orthodox Jews, he accepted. He was taken to a secret destination which, his family later discovered, was just ten minutes away from their home in Ramot, on the hills surrounding Jerusalem.

"My sons never come home without calling their mother," says Mrs Wachsmann. "We knew that if he did not call, he could not call. When he did not arrive on Sunday night we notified the army. We traced

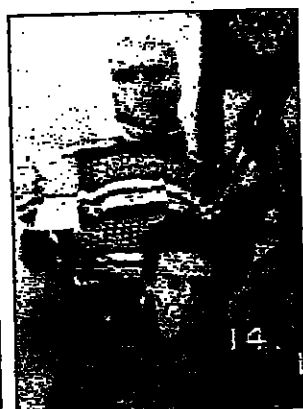
his movements to the last place where he was seen. On Tuesday afternoon, Israel television came to our home with that infamous video. I felt relief that my son was alive. I believed we would save him." There were many reasons why Nachshon was a catch for the terrorists. He was intensely religious yet he had qualified for the crack Golan Brigade. At 5ft 8in and 9½ stone, he was the smallest and lightest man in the force, a fact that would have disqualified him had he not shown such exceptional dedication and aptitude.

Hamas issued an ultimatum, demanding the release of its spiritual leader, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin (freed this year by the Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu). Mrs Wachsmann appealed to the Government of the then Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, to negotiate with the captors. He refused. She appealed to the US Government, and Warren Christopher, then Secretary of State, contacted Yasser Arafat, who promised the Wachsmanns that if Nachshon was in Gaza, he would find him and return him safely. The Wachsmanns felt optimistic.

But he was not in Gaza. On October 14 Israeli commandos raided the house where their intelligence had revealed he was being held. "Nachshon and the commander of the rescue team — just a few months older than him — were killed at the very hour of the ultimatum's expiry," says his mother.

This week saw the official opening of the Nachshon Wachsmann Centre for Tolerance and Understanding, a college she has set up in Jerusalem to hold lectures for people on both sides of the conflict. The inaugural ceremony was attended by Mr Netanyahu and the opposition leader, Ehud Barak. Mrs Wachsmann has already organised forums between Jews, Christians and Muslims designed to teach them about each other's way of life.

"My son was always the peacemaker, in the family and the army," says his mother. "He couldn't bear arguments. He felt the same about the fight between Israel and the Arabs. This centre should be



Nachshon held by Hamas

his legacy. It is important to try to educate people in peace, if not in love and friendship." In this spirit Nachshon's father, Yehuda, met Sheikh Yassin Bader, father of the man who killed Nachshon. They issued a joint statement saying that the death penalty should be enforced for murders by terrorists.

"My husband thought he had found a Palestinian partner and that Palestinian youth could become involved in working for peace. Then Hamas said it would kill Sheikh Bader and it all came to an end."

"I would love to live in a better world. I feel much more than bitterness to the animals who kidnapped my son." She looks exhausted. In addition to her ceaseless quest to keep the public memory of her son alive, she is mother to a large family. Does she treasure her remaining six sons all the more? "Oh no," she says. "We have a very normal love for them."

"Nachshon had not yet worked out his life. He was a good student, a popular boy. Everybody loved him for his good nature, his eternal smile, his compassionate personality. His whole future was ahead of him. He could have done and been anything. Instead we have a tombstone on Mount Herzl."



Esther Wachsmann: "My son was a peacemaker, in the family and the army"

The end of the affair

Should you return the diamonds when romance dies, asks Grace Bradberry

The wit Cyril Connolly was quite right when he remarked: "A lot of pain and nuisance might be avoided if the rich would only appreciate the point where love becomes money."

John Lattanzio, 49, a Wall Street trader and multimillionaire, is counting the cost of failing to make that distinction. Having loved and lost not only Ines Misan, a twenty-something Latvian model, but also the \$500,000 of jewellery he gave her, he has now gone to law in an attempt to heal if not the emotional, then the financial wounds.

His case is that Miss Misan had promised to marry him, and these are therefore engagement presents. She insists that there was no such deal. Diamonds are forever, particularly when they come from Cartier (a \$147,220 necklace), from Harry Winston (a \$289,275 platinum ring), and Van Cleef & Arpels (a \$20,026 ring).

Miss Misan has expressed horror and repugnance. A graduate of the Zsa Zsa Gabor school of dating — "I never dated a man enough to give him diamonds back" — Miss Misan said: "This is an insult for him to ask me for the jewellery back. It's like giving a child a candy and ripping it out of his mouth once he's sucking it... I get attached to gifts, especially diamonds. I'm a beautiful woman."

Her attachment to Mr Lattanzio proved weaker, and there must be material girls everywhere who sympathise with her predicament. The silver screen of one's romantic imagination can become brutally split. On one side a Disney world of diamonds, cars and Manolo Blahnik shoes, on the other a film noir feature in which Balding Barry expects quality time in return. If only one could turn off the second projector and enjoy the main movie without distraction.

True, there are few men who could match the generosity of Mr Lattanzio. The De

Beers slogan — How else can a month's salary last a lifetime? — does not apply in this case. A month of Mr Lattanzio's salary could quite easily last a lifetime converted into nothing more than Post Office Savings Certificates.

Nevertheless, this is a tale of relevance to us all. Must the dispatch of a boyfriend mean the tearful exchange of Gucci dress for Black & Decker Workmate, of cashmere sweater for a boxed set of Terry Pratchett novels? Is there a let-out clause for perishables? And what about such "non-returnables" as La Perla knickers?

Where gifts of roughly equal value have been exchanged, there need, of course, be no dilemma. A Tiffany diamond solitaire necklace exchanged for an Aramis umbrella gives more pause for thought, however.

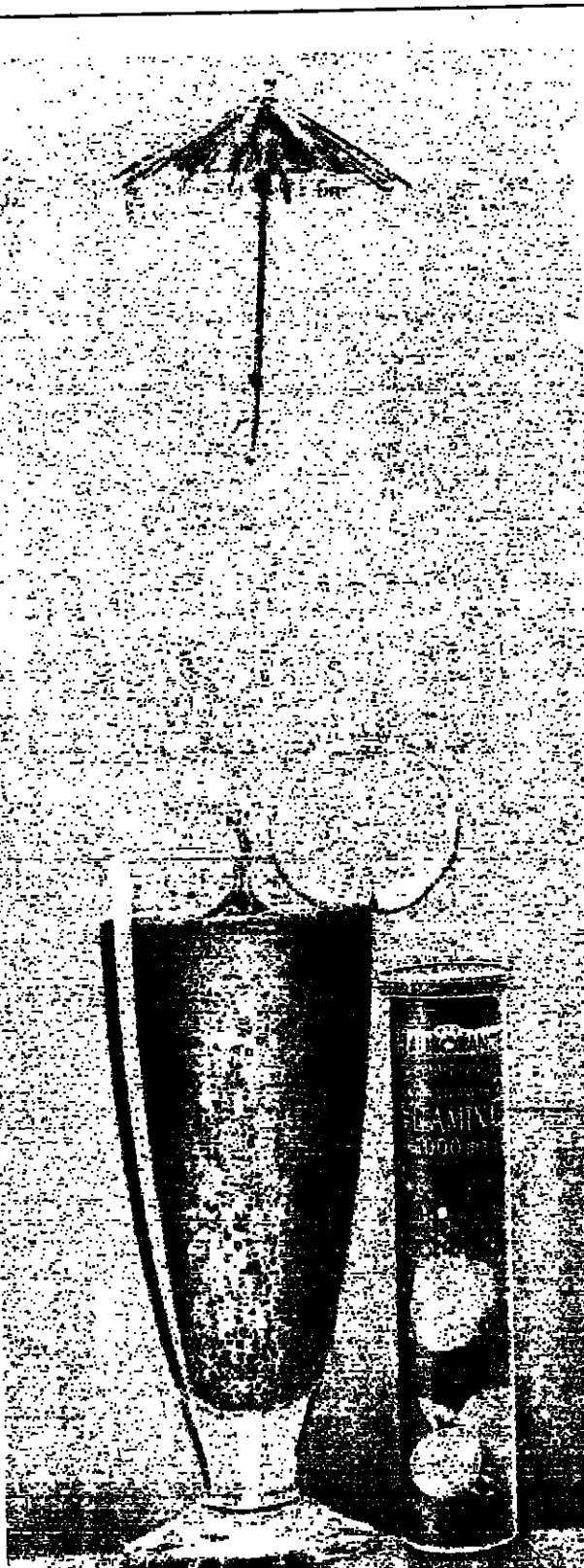
Thankfully there is no need to agonise, according to John Morgan, author of

Debrett's *New Guide to Etiquette* and *Modern Manners*. "On the whole in life, we can't give things and then take them away," he says. "It's good manners for a woman to return the engagement ring if her marriage is called off because it's a symbolic present. But if a woman divorces she keeps the ring — unless it's a family heirloom. In general, gifts are the woman's to keep."

By these rules, Mr Lattanzio can only reasonably expect to recoup the engagement ring (if that's what it was) and then only at Miss Misan's discretion (should she have any).

While Miss Misan may at first appear the villainess of the tale, it is in fact the ageing trader who has committed the *faut pas*.

"The thing about this man is he lives in a world where only money talks," says Mr Morgan. "In relationships it's quite wrong to say that everybody has their price. He's given her the presents and they are hers."



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Let charity begin with charities

Frank Prochaska on the vital role of the voluntary sector

In an article on this page last week, Matthew Parris depicted charities as "a state within the State", so raising an issue that goes to the heart of our social democracy. He suggests that by claiming tax exemptions, charities are denying the Treasury — "the greatest charity of all" — money essential to the maintenance of the welfare state. Shall we assume that he will lead the way this Christmas by making a voluntary donation to the Inland Revenue?

There is not much doubt that the law on charities is a "conceptual and administrative mess". And it is also true that many of them have lost touch with traditions of personal service and volunteering. But denying tax exemptions to all charitable institutions would mean that many would close, and others would never emerge.

Where is the advantage in this to the Treasury? Removing charitable status might produce modest gains in government revenue, but at the expense of pluralism and choice in social provision. And who is to say that civil servants would use the savings more efficiently? The Government itself, now the largest single contributor to charity, now accepts that voluntary institutions can be more efficient than state bureaucracies.

The issue is not that the voluntary sector has become a state within the State, but that so many charities have become agencies of the State. Voluntary activity may be defined as the antithesis of collective or statutory authority. Its independence is its lifeblood. With so much of their money coming from government sources, many charities today lack genuine freedom of action. Many others, of course, receive nothing from the State and pursue issues of little interest to politicians. Indeed, they are so varied that they can hardly be called a coherent sector at all. To all but tidy-minded collectivists, this creative chaos is one of the nation's great strengths. Those who call for a redefinition of charitable purposes, or the removal of tax exemptions, should keep this in mind. The elimination of charitable status would be a further stage in the perfection of the state monopoly.

Charity makes its greatest contribution to national wellbeing by its very diversity and rivalry, by its love of the *ad hoc* remedy and its seemingly inefficient muddle. It is the voluntary sector that is invaluable not simply because it provides goods or services but because it offers an altruistic, non-compulsory alternative to the State's materialistic conception of public need. It is a delusion to expect altruism to come from a Treasury-driven Government. Ask today's single parents.

To the Victorians, the idea that individuals could simply sit back, pay their taxes and leave the removal of social inequalities to government officials was anathema. They believed that the resulting bureaucracy could not satisfy local needs and aspirations. Moreover, the intermediary institutions of civil society acted as a safeguard against

overbearing officialdom. And they could achieve their purposes without being enmeshed in politics.

After the Second World War, citizens became predominantly consumers of government, rather than participants in it. To put it another way, indirect, representative democracy, expressed through Cabinet government, reigned supreme in social policy over the spontaneous pluralism of local, civic institutions. The welfare state dwarfed the funds available to charities, brought universal benefits and tackled social problems in a comprehensive way. As a result of the State's predominance, voluntary institutions settled into a decent anonymity and accepted their reduced status. Many of them disappeared or, tellingly, became adjuncts of state departments.

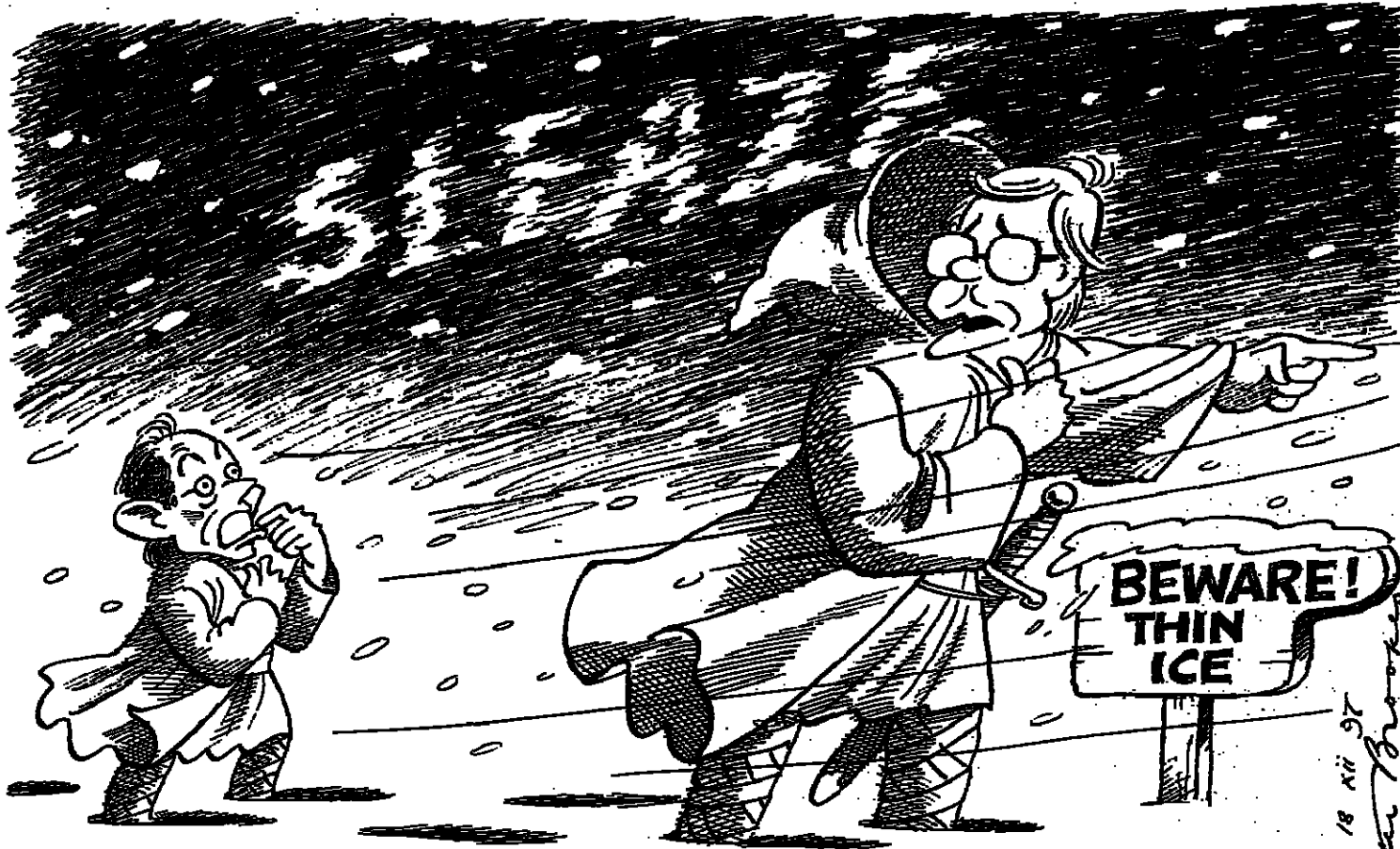
This national consensus on welfare, which grew out of the particular character of the wartime experience, has now largely collapsed. Charities have helped to fill the gaps. Meanwhile state agencies, such as NHS hospitals, have taken on quasi-charitable status. Given the spiralling costs of provision, Britain has reached a curious stage in the evolution of social policy, where the Government wants more from charitable institutions, while charities want more from the Government.

In this ambiguous welfare-world, it has become necessary to use the word "independent" before the name of a non-governmental charity, for it is no longer obvious that a charitable institution is not a government body. To believe that there are two distinct sectors, the state sector paid for by taxation, and the voluntary sector, financed by a variety of means, is rather fanciful. The two sectors have become entangled. Today, charitable donations to NHS hospitals such as Great Ormond Street are providing services which may be seen as the responsibility of the State.

Given the blurring of boundaries between the State and voluntary institutions, the most pressing issue is one identified last year by the Commission on the Future of the Voluntary Sector: "What activities still properly belong within the public sector and should not be performed elsewhere?" It is an issue that Tony Blair has already addressed. Having cast aside Labour's collectivist dogma, he declared in 1994 that the voluntary sector was "not an optional extra but a vital part of our economy". More recently, Peter Mandelson called for a compact between Government and charities and emphasised that Labour saw itself as "an enabler of welfare rather than a provider".

Where this leaves the moving frontier of social provision is unclear. But it seems unlikely that tax exemptions for charitable bodies will be withdrawn. Who in new Labour believes that the Treasury is "the greatest charity of all"?

The author is a Visiting Fellow, All Souls College, Oxford, and the author of *The Voluntary Impulse* (1988).



"Mark my footsteps, good my page, Tread thou in them boldly; Thou shalt find the winter's rage Freeze thy blood less coldly." (Good King Wenceslas)

Marianne in trousers

In an expanded Europe of historic cultural groupings, France is in a unique position to assert her dominance

The second edition of the *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations* was first published in 1953; it is probably still the best. The editors included very few quotations from the leading Nazis, but were unable to resist Goering's two most characteristic jokes: "Guns will make us powerful, but we will only make us fat," and "When I hear anyone talk of Culture, I reach for my revolver." The first was indeed Goering's own joke, which he made in a radio broadcast in the summer of 1936. However, a corrigendum in the revised 1959 edition of the dictionary traces the other epigram to an earlier source.

"Wenn ich Kultur höre... entsichere ich meinen Browning," turns out to be a line from *Schlageter*, the 1934 play by the Nazi dramatist Hanns Johst. It is, appropriately enough, spoken by a stormtrooper. Undoubtedly the original is the better form: "Browning" has greater precision than "revolver", and perhaps makes an ironic reference to Robert Browning, the English poet, which might even have been intended by Johst, though it would have meant little to Goering. "Entsichere" is also a good word; it means "release the safety catch" and it's certainly sharper than "reach". Nevertheless the epigram suits Goering's personality; it does not however apply to the Nazi Party, for there never was a party which did more to exploit culture as the route to power.

Adolf Hitler was not the first to discover the use of cultural propaganda in politics. That goes back to the earliest human societies, to the pre-history of Egypt and China, to the Roman Empire, and particularly to Augustus and Nero. Indeed Nero's last words, "Qualis artifex pereo," "what an artist dies" could well have been Hitler's. For Hitler the political battle was more cultural than pragmatic. He did not seek to convince the German electorate by rational argument; there are very few statistics in his speeches; he asked them to identify emotionally with his concept of German historic greatness, and to regard the Jewish and Bolshevik cultures as enemies.

Germany itself is united by language but has always been divided by culture. Northwest Germany, the Hamburg region, has connections with Britain to the west. The Netherlands to the south and Scandinavia to the north. The people are Protestant, liberal and rather serious-

minded, in many ways among the best people on earth.

The contrast between northwest Germany and Bavaria is between the Nordic and Protestant and the Catholic and Central European. It was an historical accident that Bavaria did not come to be part of a south central European state with Vienna and Munich as twin capital cities. Prussia and Bismarck were not preordained to win the war of 1866 in which they defeated Bavaria and Austria. After 1870, when his victory over France allowed him to complete the unification of Germany, Bismarck began the *Kulturkampf*, to maintain the dominance of Prussia, Protestantism and the imperial monarchy. If you look up "Germany in *Whittaker's Almanac* for 1900, you find it listed as the "Prussian Empire". That is, indeed, what Bismarck's Germany was.

In 1997 British politics has become predominantly cultural, rather than pragmatic. The May election was as much an aesthetic as a political rejection of the Conservatives. The Major Government left behind the most favourable economic conditions that have greeted any incoming Government since the war; if elections were simply concerned with the pocketbook, John Major might still be in Downing Street. New Labour struck the mood of the time. Tony Blair spent his leisure at Oxford as the lead singer of a pop group; aspiring Conservatives, including both Kenneth Clarke and William Hague, were more likely to have spent their university days arguing their way to the presidency of the Union. The election of 1997 was more like a gig than a debate. Youth, modernity, informality were the themes which won the greatest election victory in 90 years.

The death of Diana, Princess of Wales, was followed by a unique explosion of national grief, something no one would have foreseen, which even now is hard to remember

in its full intensity. She represented some of the same themes as the Blair election victory, the freshness, the desire to modernise old institutions, the frustration the young feel against the old guard. Her life was also perceived as much more compassionate than new Labour itself.

Tony Blair's cultural image does not appeal only to people in Britain, where he remains extremely popular though his Government has had some bad weeks. In this week's opinion poll in *Le Monde* 82 per cent of French people say that they take a "good" or "fairly good" view of Tony Blair, whereas only 11 per cent of the British take a similar view of Lionel Jospin. I doubt if this is an example of British chauvinism. Jospin is the French equivalent of old Labour, and in both countries old-fashioned socialism looks obsolete.

There are six big European countries in the European Union we are trying to put together: Germany, France, Britain, Italy, Spain and eventually Poland. In terms of geography, France, Italy and Spain are Mediterranean countries, whereas Germany, Britain and Poland are Atlantic, North Sea or Baltic. In terms of religion, France, Italy, Spain, Poland and south Germany are all Roman Catholic; Britain and north Germany are Protestant. In terms of recent history, Germany was defeated in 1918 and 1945, France in 1940. Italy withdrew from the Second World War, Spain experienced the catastrophe of the civil war, Poland was occupied by Germany in 1939 and by the Soviet Union after 1945. Britain was victorious in 1918 and 1945, both times depending on the United States, but since 1945 Britain has dissolved the greatest of the modern world empires.

Britain and France have great cultural self-confidence. In the *Le Monde* poll, 70 per cent of the British admired the French quality of *savoir vivre*. Britain has a unique literature,

thanks to Shakespeare; take him away and the corpus of English literature would still be closely comparable to the French. Germany has Goethe, the philosophers and music; Italy has Rome and the Renaissance. European culture has this great historic wealth, but the individual national cultures remain very different. Britain is significantly different from the continental nations in our closeness to the United States, the length of our democratic tradition and the strength of our individualism. Britain and Ireland are pulled towards American culture by the English language; French, Italian and Spanish are all Latin-based languages.

If one looks at Europe's postwar history from a narrowly economic and political point of view, one may be surprised by the way the French have so often determined policy. German war guilt, and the memory of the Holocaust, have certainly made the Germans reluctant to flaunt their industrial power, but that is waning with the new generation. When one looks at the cultural balance, France's strength becomes less surprising. In population, the 15 EU countries divide into four groups.

The Latin, Roman Catholic or Mediterranean group includes France, Italy, Spain, Greece and Portugal, with a combined population of 175 million. The German-speaking group consists of Germany, Austria and Luxembourg and part of Belgium; their combined population is 115 million. The English language group consists of the United Kingdom and Ireland, with a population of just over 60 million. Sweden, Denmark and Finland make up a small Scandinavian group with a population of 20 million.

Inside these groups there are big cultural variations, but France is the strongest power in the largest cultural group. The addition of nearly 40 million Catholic Poles, historically suspicious of Germany, can only strengthen French leadership. Germany has neither sought nor received a British alliance to balance the Nordic against the Latin group. There is a *Kulturkampf* inside the European Union, and France is the best-placed nation. The Franco-German alliance is a marriage in which Marianne may lack the physical strength, but still wears the cultural trousers.

From local hero to outcast

Magnus Linklater on the tragedy of Mohammed Sarwar

Mohammed Sarwar was a great catch for the Labour Party. He was Britain's first Muslim MP, a self-made millionaire, a man to break the mould of old Labour politics, and a symbol of racial tolerance for the new party. The National Executive backed him in a grim fight for the newly created Govan seat against one of its own loyalists, and defended him against charges of vote-rigging in the selection procedure. His political contacts in Pakistan were considered an asset, and his long stint as a Glasgow councillor gave him grassroots credibility. All in all, he seemed the ideal MP for new Labour.

But what looked good on paper failed to measure up on the streets of Glasgow, and Mr Sarwar's arrest and appearance in court yesterday on charges of electoral fraud brings to an end a strange and embarrassing episode from which the party emerges with its image badly damaged. It now regards its sometime favourite son as a pariah, and makes no secret of its wish to be rid of him. Mr Sarwar will face intense pressure to resign so that Govan can find a replacement MP. His Labour membership has been suspended and he has been deprived of the right to represent the party at any level. Rarely can a fall from political grace have been so complete and so brutal.

But if the party believes it can simply wash its hands of this affair, it will have to think again. Mr Sarwar is entitled to feel more aggrieved over the way he has been so brusquely abandoned, while elsewhere — in Paisley and on Glasgow City Council — allegations of vote-rigging and misconduct go unpunished by anything more than an interminable inquiry. Two other MPs have been suspended (one since reinstated); six councillors are still being investigated; charges that public funds in Paisley have been misappropriated are still unresolved; the party executive seems incapable of clearing out the corrupting elements that continue to stifle politics in the West of Scotland.

The vote-rigging charges against Mr Sarwar are not exactly unfamiliar in the Glasgow area. Trade union lists have regularly been used to rustle up names with which to swing the vote behind some local candidate. It is just one of the charges being investigated in Paisley. In Mr Sarwar's case the allegations involve a Pakistani, rather than a trade union, network. Until the evidence is heard at his trial we cannot know the truth, but he is at least entitled to ask why the party has failed to punish conduct elsewhere which it now finds, in his case, so unacceptable.

I saw a certain amount of Mr Sarwar both before his selection and during his election campaign. He is not an easy man — prickly, arrogant, intensely ambitious. There is no doubting his achievements as a businessman, starting out selling eggs from door to door and ending with a chain of cash-and-carry warehouses which have made him a wealthy man. Immensely hard-working and committed to the Labour cause, he commands loyalty from a tight-knit group of Pakistani supporters, as well as business associates whom he has helped on the way up.

But despite his long service on the council, he struck me as lacking political experience, short-sighted about his tactics, and prone to paranoia. Some of his party aides seemed to verge on the maverick. His was a campaign that clearly needed close monitoring and support from party headquarters.

It was not as if they were ignorant about the problem. Allegations concerning the Govan party lists had already led to a ferocious row at the time of Mr Sarwar's selection as candidate, with the National Executive called in to investigate and adjudicate. Yet the party continued to speak of him as a standard-bearer for the Muslim community, and to predict that he would win by a handsome majority. In the event, his was one of the closest of the Glasgow votes, with the SNP candidate coming within 2,000 votes of victory.

Almost before the dust had settled, new allegations began to circulate, and it was at this point that the party began to distance itself rapidly from this problematic new MP. Whatever is eventually proved against him, the party will have to answer for its failure to detect and deal with a problem it knew existed before it turned into a crisis. It is not only Labour that has been damaged. The Muslim community, which had been led to expect so much, feels itself humiliated.

This week sees the publication of the Scotland Bill. Running through the whole debate will be a question that is increasingly exercising the country: who will be running the new Scotland? Constant reassurances that "a new type of MP" will emerge to ensure that the parliament is not taken over by the old party hegemony are beginning to sound a little thin. There is, instead, every sign that some familiar old names will be moving effortlessly on to the party lists, which are now being drawn up. If Labour is to stop this happening, it will have to exercise rather more control than it has been capable of in the past.

Golden silence

WE have wondered here why Ian Hargreaves, the garrulous Editor of the *New Statesman* (proprietor: Geoffrey Robinson) has been strangely muted about the Robinson affair. Now we have discovered why. The company at the heart of the hoo-hah, Stenbell, pays Hargreaves's salary. My eye is drawn to a payment of more than £500,000 recently made by the *New Statesman* to Stenbell, which made complex transactions with an offshore trust on behalf of Robinson. Hargreaves offers this explanation: "Although what I do every day, and every week, is go into the *Statesman's* offices, I am technically employed by Stenbell. So the *Statesman* has to pay them for the services of myself and my staff. Big money, this, for an editor and staff of a small magazine. Impressive that it can raise the cash. It has come a long way since its foundation in 1913 by Sidney and Beatrice Webb 'to make the thinking person socialist'. In 1958 its board constituted itself a 'self-perpetuating trust' as the best way 'to ensure that the ideals and policies of the journal shall be kept free from outside interests'."

But since Robinson, now Paymaster General, took over last year it has lost its Red fever: dreary Marxist theories of ownership have been replaced by bracing eulogies on company profits.

● **ALLEGEDLY** bribing their instructors for better pass marks has

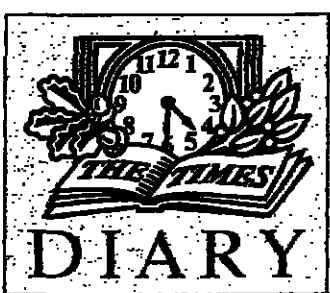


Hargreaves, Robinson

done little to enhance the reputation of foreign cadets at Sandhurst. They are now referred to by their British peers as FLOPS: foreign lazy overseas plonkers.

Leak soup

A CASE for Poirot. The strange vanishing of David Clark's career as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster is the subject of a double investigation by Robin Mountfield.



his Permanent Secretary and Leak-Buster General. So exhaustive have the researches become that he is now called by colleagues after the fictional Belgian detective.

Mountfield is particularly keen to discover how Clark's White Paper on freedom of information and his weakness for travelling first class were leaked — one on the *Today* programme, the other in this column. Frankly, I think Mr Clark should be thankful that we spared his dignity by not detailing the difficulties he suffered trying to gain access to the VIP lounge at Heathrow on a recent trip.

● **THOSE** fading songbirds the *Spice Girls* will land on MPs' desks today, thanks to the House Magazine. Its Christmas card to Members depicts Westminster Spice: Tony Blair as Ginger, William Hague as Baby and Paddy

Ashtown as Sporty, with the Lord Chancellor as Posh and Speaker Betty Boothroyd as, er, Scary — complete with bare midriff and a portulaca-shaped jewel in her navel. Betty will love it.

My word!

AFTER the Lord Chancellor confirmed my important story that he has an official Orange Peeler, another curiosity about the Lord Irvine of Lairg has come to my attention. The usually media-shy Irvine agreed to take part in a documentary about human rights for Radio 4's *Analysis*. After the programme was broadcast, the BBC received a complaint from the Lord Chancellor that Lord Woolf, Master of the Rolls, had received more air time. Irvine discovered the outrage after his secretary obtained a transcript of the show and counted the words. If only he had talked in the interview about his wallpaper.

● **ALASTAIR CAMPBELL**, Man of Power (volume 27). Ministers are advised to seek permission from Tony Blair's press attaché before accepting an invitation to sup with the enemy (journalists). Naughty ministers have resorted to subterfuge by arranging lunch through their constituency offices. When they head for the restaurant, they leave their ministerial cars behind and catch the bus, ensuring that Whitehall's best intelligence network — government chauffeurs — are out of the loop.

● **Lot's strife**. SOTHEY'S is having a bad week. After yesterday's wrangle about selling smuggled art, I can now disclose that the auction house has sold a box of documents unaware that it contained rare correspondence from members of the Shelley gang. Lot 185 was



Shelley shock: Mary, Byron

described as little more than a collection of papers with an estimate of just £2,500 to £3,500.

But canny dealers inspected the box before the auction and discovered some gems: an 1840s letter from Mary Shelley, who wrote *Frankenstein*, imploring a biographer not to write an expose about her late husband Percy. There were also letters between Claire Clairmont — mother of Allegra, Lord Byron's daughter — and E.J. Trelawney. The lot sold for £14,375.

A big hammer at Sotheby's explained that it was "physically impossible to list everything". At the same auction, the Warwick "Shakespeare" deed, much hyped by the auction house, was withdrawn because it failed to reach the reserve of £250,000 to £300,000.

JASPER GERARD



OUR ISLAND STORY

History has become a battlefield for Britishness

"It is time to rediscover the meaning of being British; to find out who we are through what we have been." Thus Simon Schama, the most distinguished British historian of his generation, justified this week the BBC's millennium *Television History of Britain* which he is to write and present.

History, like any discipline, does not necessarily need any justification other than the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. Liberal learning is a good in itself. Inescapably, however, it is a tool for making sense of the present. Equally inescapably, that tool becomes a weapon in the hands of factions battling to define the nation's identity. George Orwell, writing nearly 50 years ago, recognised that he who controlled the past, controlled the future. In the current Battle of Britishness it is the past which is the most fiercely contested terrain.

Another distinguished British historian, Jonathan Clark, who like Simon Schama is currently teaching in America, has produced a dense but illuminating guide to the battlefield in an essay for the *Historical Journal*. Although its audience, and language, are academic, its insights are of universal interest. Dr Clark takes as his starting point the declining interest in British history in the US and blames compatriots who have provided American, and indeed British, readers with "inadequate versions of British history". Their inadequacies, however, have consequences far beyond the New World's ivory towers.

Dr Clark explains how a particular approach to British history which seeks to deconstruct British identity and render it an "invention" and the product of "imagination", serves a specific ideological purpose. Historians such as Eric Hobsbawm and Linda Colley as well as David Cannadine have, he argues, tried to explain British identity in terms which call for a radical renovation of native traditions. These historians have tried to explain how the furniture with which we have all grown up no longer fits our circumstances.

Dr Colley's *Britons*, one of the most influential historical works of the Nineties, argues that British identity is an artificial construct built in the 18th century, a keep which encircled the four nations of the United Kingdom to defend their Protestant faith against continental enemies. Her work has encouraged those who believe that the time has come for a new design. The sense that Britain's forms of government, still recognisably an inheritance from our ancestors, are no longer adequate, also informs David Cannadine's work. Dr Clark crystallises Dr Cannadine's argument as the

view that "aristocratic values were a continual check on British modernisation". For Dr Cannadine that modernisation is clearly incomplete: he argues that the inevitable rescue from the ruins of decayed Britishness will be European integration.

This is poor politics built on worse history. The history-with-a-purpose of Colley and Cannadine, the notions of automatic obsolescence and in-built inevitability in their work can be contrasted with a different approach. There is another school of history which owes something to the philosophy of Bishop Berkeley, something to the sensibility of Samuel Coleridge, a little to the political insights of Michael Oakeshott and a great deal to the example of R.G. Collingwood. It is a school which seeks to understand historical actors in their own terms rather than as *dramatis personae* in another's epic, which sees political action as an autonomous activity in its own right rather than a medium for explaining theories of class, gender or national emancipation. Its special power at this moment is its deliberate, devastating, critique of those who believe there is only one course for Britain — break-up and then absorption into Europe.

There is an alternative narrative of Britain, which locates a special sense of collective British identity and destiny well before the formal Act of Union in 1707. Any audience of *Henry V* will recognise that sense already clearly understood in Shakespeare's depiction of an army where Scot, Welshman and Englishman are bound in a common endeavour. Dr Clark has himself shown the weakness in historical analysis of the 17th and 18th centuries, which sees Britain, by virtue of a series of revolutions, setting out on a course of liberal improvement whose trajectory takes us in a direction congenial to today's constitutional radicals.

Dr Clark's interpretation of Britain's past will not convince all, but it is a vital corrective to an interpretation which has become a new orthodoxy. The work of Colley, Cannadine and their associates in providing an organising narrative has helped to popularise history and given commentators a big picture to admire, or deprecate. In an academic environment overpopulated with those who over specialise, they deserve praise for that. But in the attempt to understand our past no one school should dominate, especially one driven by a very political sense of what we should be. As we approach the millennium, history, of all disciplines, should be our protection against those who see only one moral in our island story.

IMPRUDENT PRUDENTIAL

The FSA will have to hit where it hurts

Howard Davies has begun his tenure at the new City watchdog, the Financial Services Authority (FSA), with a bang. His report on mis-selling at the Prudential Corporation must be the one of the most savage indictments of a City institution ever delivered.

The Pru suffered from "deep-seated and longstanding management failures" and had "a cultural disposition against compliance" which led to "continuing persistent and serious breaches... across major areas of its business". All in all, its conduct "has fallen substantially below the standards that the public has a right to expect from a regulated firm".

The Pru, which owns 4 per cent of British industry and is perhaps the most famous name in British insurance, has been labelled as cynical and exploitative. Under its controversial former chief executive, Mick Newmarch, it chose to be regulated by a body, the Securities and Investments Board, which had no power to fine, unlike the Personal Investment Authority, which regulates the Pru's rivals. As a result, Mr Davies can, for the moment, do no more than "name and shame".

But the Pru seems to exude little of the latter. Mr Newmarch's successor, Sir Peter

Davis, is featuring in his own television advertisements as "the man from the Pru", in an attempt to fashion a wholesome image for a company that recommended many of its clients to buy financial products that were not suitable for their circumstances. Sir Peter is now trying to tackle the problems that have beset his business — but not before time.

The Pru will soon come under the ambit of a regulator that does have the power to fine. That will be welcome for a company that, in the past, has appeared more concerned with its own prosperity than with that of its customers. When Mr Davies can hit companies like the Pru where it hurts, he should be able to achieve more than embarrassment.

Embarrassment is no longer an effective sanction in the City. There is barely a major insurance company that has not been named and shamed by its legal regulator. Customers in search of a wholly reputable provider are understandably frustrated. Yet these scandals have come at a time when the Government is planning to transfer many of its responsibilities — such as pensions and long-term care insurance — to the private sector. The FSA will have to work fast to reassure customers that the industry is now up to scratch.

HIGH SPIRITS

The best central heating is proof against the cold

Nelly the elephant may be cold, but in Moscow she is certainly happy. Her trainers are helping her and her fellow circus pachyderms through the present cold snap with a warming bucket of vodka. The effect can only be imagined: elephants, like human beings, become frisky, relaxed and uninhibited when generously plied with drink. But when a three-tonne elephant takes a fancy to the ballerina on its back or topples off its circus stand, the consequences are far weightier than the friendly pinch on the bottom (or the attempt to conduct a brass band) that results from a presidential indulgence in Russia's favourite tipple.

Russians are sentimental people, who pamper their pets, their children and themselves when winter sets in. And to most Russians, nothing can rival the national elixir at that warm, cheers and cures. Vodka is at once a folk medicine, a hallucinogen revealing the mysteries of the soul, and a lubricant more commonly applied to sophisticated machinery than any conventional liquid.

When coughs and colds set in, Russians massage vodka into the chest, and dose themselves with generous medicinal quantities. The aura itself has curative qualities, they maintain — though indistinguishable

from the natural aroma of a crowded Russian bus. When the winter stove is stoked high, the tea is sizzling in the samovar and a Russian's thoughts turn to higher things, vodka is the potion that turns doggerel into poetry. When the car freezes down in deepest Siberia, a little vodka applied to the engine and set alight will do wonders for the ignition.

To a Russian, vodka has almost mythical qualities, and the greater the amount on hand, the larger the myth. In vain do doctors, Russian Baptists and sportspeople like Mikhail Gorbachev rail against the evils of drink. To no avail have successive Russian Governments encouraged the cultured consumption of wine as a substitute for the potent water of life. There is no substitute in the Russian soul or shop for vodka: even Bolshoi dancers swear that their performance is unimpaired by its consumption, whereas wine or beer will ruin their *jetés*.

The cold brings out the bottles as well as the fur hats, and Russians look forward to winter with anticipation. The Moscow elephants must relish their warming buckets — though no trainer who calls himself a Russian would not also generously test the fluid to see that it was the real thing.

هكذا من الإلهام

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1 Pennington Street, London E1 9KN Telephone 0171-782 5000

Likely winners and losers in review of welfare benefits

From the Director General of Age Concern England

Sir, Over 60 per cent of the UK's disabled people are pensioners and are likely to bear the brunt of the rumoured £2 billion cut in spending on the disabled (reports, December 13, 15 and 16). Age Concern is receiving calls from distressed ill and disabled older people who deserve immediate reassurance from the Government that they will receive the money they need to survive.

In its determination to prune the welfare budget, the Government has already targeted pensioners. Over one million pensioners are not claiming as much as the £1.7 billion in benefits they are entitled to, yet the Government has recently decided to reduce the period that benefit claims can be backdated from up to a year in some cases, down to just one month. This, linked to backdating restrictions from the previous Government, will take £77 million per year out of the poorest pensioners' pockets.

On Thursday, a parliamentary standing committee will discuss plans to restrict full council-tax benefit for people living in houses worth £120,000 or more. This will save only £15 million in the first year, but will hit around 65,000 people, 30,000 of them pensioners who are managing on low incomes but find themselves living in homes that have gone up in value.

Labour 'rebels'

From Mr Philip Cowley

Sir, You reported "Usual suspects joined by new Labour rebels", December 12 that of the 47 Labour MPs who voted against the Government on lone-parent benefits 12 were newly elected. In fact, the number was 14, your correspondents having missed Ann Cryer and Jonathan Shaw.

The oversight of Ann Cryer is important, because of all the newly elected Labour women MPs, she was the only one to vote against the Government. Initial analysis of the voting demonstrates that male Labour MPs were more likely to vote against the cut in lone-parent benefits than were female MPs. And Labour's newly elected women MPs were less likely to vote against the cut than those Labour women MPs who had been in the House before the 1997 election.

Before the last election I co-wrote a paper with my colleagues Professor Philip Norton and Matthew Bailey entitled *Blair's Bastards*, which examined the voting behaviour of Labour MPs in the 1992 Parliament and identified those MPs most likely to cause trouble to any incoming Labour government. The paper was criticised by the Labour leadership who described it as "academic nonsense", but it proved remarkably accurate at identifying those who would cause trouble for the Government last week.

Of the 32 MPs we identified and who are still in the House, 22 voted against the Government, and seven abstained, leaving just 3 who voted for the Government. The 22 included Alice Mahon and Malcolm Chisholm, who both resigned from the Government in order to vote against the cut.

We ended *Blair's Bastards* by saying that whilst there were some Labour MPs who were clearly ministers-in-waiting, there were also those who were rebels-in-waiting. Last week, they stepped waiting.

Yours faithfully,
PHILIP COWLEY,
University of Hull,
Department of Politics,
Hull HU6 7RX,
p.j.cowley@pol.ac.uk
December 15.

Off-key remarks

From Miss Beryl M. Goldsmith

Sir, When is a typist not a typist? When she is rather more than someone sitting in front of a machine with plugs in her ears, bashing out her master's words.

On two occasions this week your Diary referred to two senior personal assistants in the House of Commons as typists. Miss Claire Gagneux (December 12) and myself (December 10) are amused rather than indignant. But our masters — neither of whom employs a "typist" — are not best pleased.

Yours faithfully,
BERYL M. GOLDSMITH
(Personal Assistant to Lord Tebbit and Parliamentary Assistant to Mr Michael Tredwell, MP),
34 Thomas More House,
Barbican, EC2Y 8BT,
December 12.

Sense of direction

From Mrs Dorothy Drake

Sir, Perhaps men do learn to pay attention to direction more than women (*Science Briefing*, December 8; letter, December 11).

My husband has no use for road maps. When finding his way in this country and in Europe all he needs is the answer to two questions: Where's the sun? Where's the sea?

He's not bad at reaching his destination — except after dark.

Yours faithfully,
DOROTHY DRAKE,
11 Queen Parade,
Harrogate HG1 5PW,
December 15.

The change of Government has done little to improve life for the poorest pensioners.

Yours sincerely,
SALLY GREENGROSS,
Director General,
Age Concern England,
Astral House,
1268 London Road, SW16 4ER,
December 16.

From Mr Nigel H. Harris, FRCS

Sir, It is widely believed that a Government review of disablement benefits is taking place. The anticipated outcry will be premature until all the facts are known. I will refer to one example.

I examine about 400 individuals a year in receipt of incapacity benefit, following musculo-skeletal injury, who are in fact perfectly fit for alternative employment. They have either been involved in a road traffic accident or sustained an injury at work, and they are making a claim for compensation. The majority allege they are unfit for work and, after a reasonably stringent DSS disablement benefit medical examination, they are provided with incapacity benefit. This precludes them from applying for work. For many, in fact, receipt of the benefit is a positive disincentive to even think about a job.

It is very rare indeed for a musculo-skeletal injury to cause a person to be

totally and permanently incapable of any work, although I appreciate that some will be restricted on the open job market. Clearly they should be registered unemployed and actually seeking work, and incapacity benefit should only be for those considered to be unemployable on medical grounds.

The fit-for-work disabled should be provided with a certificate to indicate the type of work for which they are suitable. This might be linked to schemes whereby employers have a statutory duty to employ a certain percentage of disabled people.

I predict that if some such measures were implemented, the £8 billion overall cost of incapacity benefit would be halved, and the true level of unemployment made clear.

Yours faithfully,
NIGEL H. HARRIS
(Consultant orthopaedic surgeon),
72 Harley Street, W1N 1AE.

From Mr Christopher Slade

Sir, Is the Government (and those who vote with it) targeting for benefits cuts the very poor, their children and the handicapped because they are people who either do not have a vote or are unlikely to use it?

Yours faithfully,
C. J. SLADE,
13 Church Road,
Maiden Newton, Dorset DT2 0AB.

EU option for Turkey and Cyprus

From Mr Roger Forster

Sir, I write from a church which has had a number of contacts with Turkey over the years. One of our members worked for the European Union office in Ankara and contributed to a book on the prospects for Turkish membership of the EU.

More recently some of our members have been walking through Turkey as part of the Reconciliation Walk, a walk from Cologne to Jerusalem on the 900th anniversary of the First Crusade, to express regret for the atrocities committed to Muslim, Jew and Christian alike during the Crusades. At that stage of course it was the Europeans who conducted a campaign of murder and rape across Turkish territory.

It is now more than 34 years since the EEC signed the Ankara Agreement with Turkey "to establish ever closer bonds between the Turkish people and the peoples brought together in the European Economic Community". The objective of Turkish accession to the Community was already stated in 1963 and has been restated by the European side in agreements since.

This is not to deny that Turkey has significant problems. Yet it seems to us that the equivocal attitude taken by Europe to Turkey over the years has been singularly unhelpful to the Turkish authorities who have tried to address those problems. Turks look to friends for support when they face difficulties. It seems reasonable for them to expect it from partner states who sign such agreements. Such a sense of support from Europe has been regrettably missing over the years.

Turkey has been incontrovertibly part of European history for centuries. As long as the Turks wish to pursue the European option, we would like to put it on record that there are Euro-

pean churches which support their right to do so.

Yours sincerely,
ROGER FORSTER
(Leader),
Ichthus Christian Fellowship,
107 Stanstead Road,
Forest Hill, SE23 1HH,
December 14.

From Mr Tony Mitsides

Sir, In your leader today, "Blair's X factor", you validly anticipate some momentous decisions over EMU and EU enlargement during Britain's presidency in the new year. But I submit you are not right to say the decision to include Cyprus in the first round of new applicants for membership is "unwise".

This commitment was undertaken by the Council of Ministers of the EU in 1995 following approval of the customs union with Turkey. It specified that negotiations with the Republic of Cyprus would start within six months of the intergovernmental conference which ended in Amsterdam last summer.

The prospect of Cyprus joining the EU was greeted by President Clinton's Special Envoy for Cyprus, Richard Holbrooke, as the biggest new factor in the 30-year stalemate. Furthermore, Cyprus fulfilled all the economic, cultural and other criteria for membership. Many thought at the time that the decision indicated also a wish to avoid Cyprus becoming a hostage for European membership to Ankara, and a reminder to Turkey that it had not moved enough towards a settlement despite numerous resolutions and great efforts at the United Nations and in Europe.

Yours faithfully,
TONY MITSIDES,
70 Cissbury Ring South, N12 7BD,
December 13.

Maxwell connection

From Mr Bruce V. Jones

Sir, The letter from Mr Joe Haines (December 10) does rather provoke the comment: "Come off it, Joe." I too am one of the 25,000 ex-Maxwell employees. I did at least last six months until I resigned, but in typical Cap'n Bob style he roared: "You can't resign; you work for me; you're fired." Apart from that we finally parted on good terms.

The truth is it was generally known by people who had come up against him in a working context what Maxwell was like. I witnessed many of our political great-and-good in his office and was amazed by the sycophancy and toadying behaviour: to have seen Maxwell and George Brown together, as a mutual admiration society, was far from uplifting.

It was these people who allowed Maxwell to thrive for so long. The world of political "luvvies" breeds and accepts confidence tricksters like Maxwell: all its members are guilty. Both Labour and Conservatives were seduced by him.

I have two books on my shelves about Maxwell: one is by Tom Bower and it presents a very good picture of the Maxwell I knew (and Maxwell tried to stop it being published). The other is by Joe Haines, written while he worked for Maxwell.

Yours faithfully,
BRUCE V. JONES
(General Manager,
Pergamon Press, 1965),
Don Amoney House,
Down Ampney,
Cirencester GL7 5QW.

Opera committee

From Professor Bryan Magee

Sir, I hope that Sir Richard Eyre, who is chairing the committee that will report to the Government on the future of opera and ballet in London, will recommend that the two opera companies share two theatres, not one (letters, December 5 and 6).

What London needs, in full-time operation, is one big opera house and one smaller one — at the moment we have two big ones.

Why not suggest that the Royal Opera and the English National Opera share both the refurbished Covent Garden theatre and the new Sadlers Wells, each company putting on its big productions in the former and its more intimate ones in the latter?

That way London will get the opera provision it needs.

Yours faithfully,
BRYAN MAGEE,
12 Falkland House,
Marlow Road, W8 5LF,
December 6.

Hidden pockets

From Mrs Sally Gibbons

Sir, There is nothing new under the sun — and certainly not knickers with pockets (report and photograph, December 11). These excellent garments were regulation wear when I was at school. Admittedly they were slightly more voluminous than the ones designed by the girls of Tiffin's School, and they came in standard navy blue, with a distinctly scratchy finish, but the pockets were invaluable, being hidden receptacles for all those essential but forbidden items like sticky sweets and photographs of Dickie Valentine.

Yours faithfully,
SALLY GIBBONS,
Flat 6,
288 Earls Court Road, SW5 9AS,
December 11.

Letters should carry a daytime telephone number. They may be faxed to 0171-782-5046. e-mail to: letters@the-times.co.uk

Cost of recovering those lost at sea

From Mr M. Wilkinson

Sir, Whilst I was sorry to hear of the deaths of four crewmen on the trawler *Sapphire*, I did not agree with requests for the Government to fund the £500,000 operation to recover the bodies, or that such expenses should be met by the Government in future cases (reports, December 15 and 16).

Loss of life is an ever-present risk for seagoers, and for centuries it has been accepted that bodies are unlikely to be recovered. The technological advances made in recent years that may aid recovery do not, in my view, justify huge sums of public money being spent in this way, when patients are experiencing a shortage of resources in hospitals.

Also, who would decide which cases were appropriate for recovery? Marine technology is so far advanced that once a wreck is located, time and resources are the only obstacles to salvage. Would it be fair to fund the recovery of some but not others? Would the Government set a cost limit?

Whilst I respect the widows' rights to commemorate their late husbands in whatever way they choose, perhaps the money could have provided a more practical memorial if it had been made available to, for example, any of the seamen's missions, a benefit fund for sailors' widows or the RNLI.

Yours faithfully,
M. WILKINSON,
27 Swallow Gardens,
Carlton, Nottingham NG4 1NR,
December 16.

Britannia's future

From Mr Neil McCart

Sir, Lord Callaghan of Cardiff and Captain Richard Sharpe, RN (letters, December 11 and 13 respectively; see also letters, November 27, December 2 and 16) are both wrong, in my view, in wishing to see *Britannia* broken up. If their argument is taken to its logical conclusion there would be no point in preserving any historical ship, including the *Mary Rose*, *HMS Victory*, or *HMS Warrior*, all of which add to the nation's rich maritime heritage.

However, Manchester and Leith would both quite clearly be the wrong venue for *Britannia*. The yacht's natural home is Portsmouth, where she would form part of the city's great naval heritage, this already attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors from home and abroad each year. Keep there she would never become an embarrassment or a liability.

I would have thought that Lord Callaghan, as a former Pompey man, would have added his support to the city's bid. It is not too late to keep *Britannia* in her home port.

Yours faithfully,
NEIL MCCART,
17 Wyman's Lane, Swindon Village,
Cheltenham GL51 9QA,
December 17.

Beef on the bone

From Dr Richard Henderson

Sir, Surely the answer to this dilemma (letters, December 5, 13, 15, 16, 17) is obvious and is given us by the parallel issue of tobacco?

Consumers should be provided with information about possible (albeit remote) health risks associated with beef on the bone and allowed to make up their own minds, but beef farmers and butchers should be banned from sponsoring sporting events.

Yours faithfully,
R. G. HENDERSON,
Ord House, Little Fenceote,
Northallerton DL7 0RR,
richardhenderson2@compuserve.com
December 15.

From Dr Henry Hardy

Sir, In view of the discovery by reputable scientists that life is almost universally fatal, there is a pressing need for legislation to ban human reproduction. Why is the Government dragging its feet?

Yours etc,
HENRY HARDY,
22 Norham Road, Oxford OX2 6SF.

From Mrs Jean Miles

Sir, Wild animals do not normally behave like the deer who joined the clay-pigeon shoot in Sutherland (report and photograph, today). In a rabbit, one would suspect myxomatosis; in a fox, distemper. In this case, BSE?

Yours faithfully,
JEAN MILES,
31 Drummond Place,
Edinburgh EH3 6PW,
jean@jeanmiles.demon.co.uk
December 10.

From Mr Shaun Eveleigh

Sir, Not so much a "Nanny State" (letter, today) as a limited streak-holding society.

Yours faithfully,
SHAUN EVELEIGH,
Calmbrook, Fairy Road,
Seaview, Isle of Wight PO34 5HF,
December 16.

From Mrs Diana Hastie

Sir, Is turkey on the bone banned yet?

Yours faithfully,
DIANA HASTIE,
Groom's Cottage, Burton Hall Road,
Rossett, Wrexham LL12 0AR,
December 16.

NEWS

Blair firm on welfare plan

■ Tony Blair told Labour MPs that internal revolts and fear of unpopularity would not deflect him from reforming the welfare state. He warned those upset by the cut in benefits for single mothers that there would be still harder decisions to come, and he attacked MPs who handed propaganda gifts to the Tories. Page 1

New embarrassment for Robinson

■ Geoffrey Robinson faced fresh embarrassment over his financial affairs when it was disclosed that he was reported to the Bank of England in 1980 on suspicion of breaching exchange control regulations. Sir Michael Edwards, then chairman of BL, is understood to have expressed concerns that Mr Robinson may have moved tens of thousands of pounds. Page 1

Bombers' Christmas

Three IRA bombers, each a high-risk prisoner serving multiple life sentences at the Maze prison, are being allowed home for Christmas and the New Year. Page 1

Shadow shuffle

William Hague shuffled his team after Labour protested at a Shadow Minister's links to a chain of nursing homes which they said paid low wages. Page 2

Bookies catch cold

Bookmakers responded to the Siberian conditions by cutting the odds on a white Christmas from 4/1 to 2/1 despite forecasters' predictions that warmer weather was on the way. Page 3

Sarwar in court

Mohammed Sarwar, the suspended Labour MP for Glasgow Govan, appeared in court to face charges of election fraud, attempting to pervert the course of justice. Page 4

Clark 'teased'

Alan Clark, the Conservative MP and diarist, loves to be "naughty and famous" but is not prepared to be teased by a newspaper, a court was told. Page 5

Private moments

Some of the public's most private moments are to be broadcast in a new spate of fly-on-the-wall documentaries to capitalise on the popularity of "voyeuristic" television. Page 6

Hague escapes from strippers

■ William Hague's arrival for his pre-wedding celebrations was delayed when three strippers showed him their charms on the doorstep of the Conservative Carlton Club. The Tory leader made a getaway as the girls shed fur coats and maces in front of him and his fiancée. The three women had been put up to the stunt by a cable television company. Page 1

Betjeman love

A previously unknown poem dedicated by Sir John Betjeman to his unattainable love, Myfanwy Piper, has been discovered in a book on Sir John Soane. Page 7

Dome secrecy

Peter Mandelson should spend more time answering MPs' questions about the Millennium Dome, according to a report attacking the secrecy surrounding the project. Page 9

Injury fund

The Government is to create a "public interest fund" to pay where the State has caused injury through negligence. Page 12

Warm front

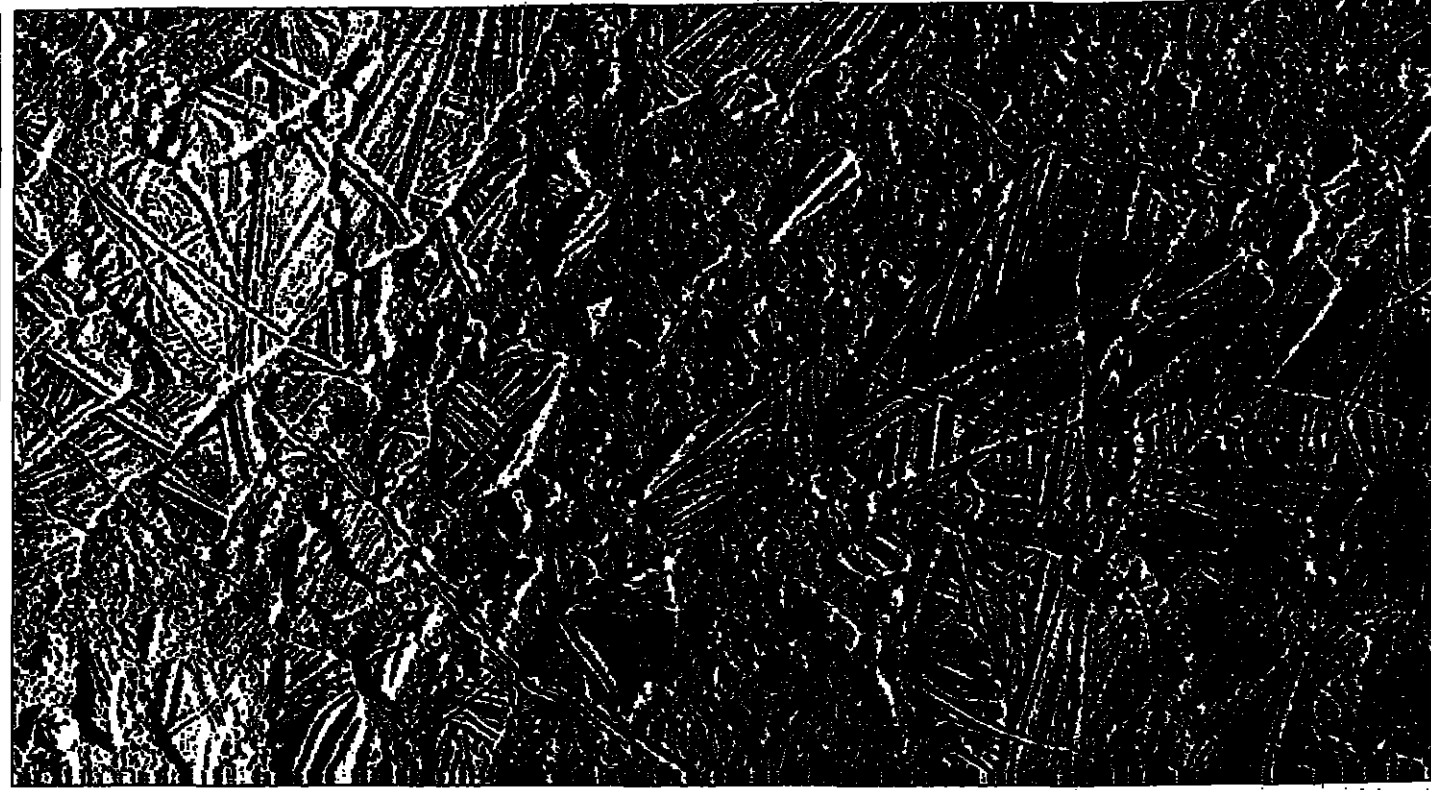
Flying in the face of scientific research, millions of Russians, including some of their pets, are getting through the cold snap with the help of vodka. Page 13

'Fatty' Jackal

Carlos the Jackal, on trial for triple murder in a Paris court, has angrily rejected suggestions that he be nicknamed "Fatty" as a schoolboy set him on the path of international terrorism. Page 14

Guns in paradise

A long-running dispute between a Welsh expatriate couple and the Government of Antigua and Barbuda, erupted in gunfire when shots were fired in the office of the brother of the Prime Minister. Page 17



The surface of Europa, a moon of Jupiter, taken from the Galileo spacecraft. The white and blue areas have been covered by ice particles

Trains: Angel Trains, the money spinning rolling stock company

born from the British Rail privatisation, is to change hands again. This time it is being sold on by a Japanese bank. Page 25

Pay off: Richard Oster is to leave Cookson, the industrial group of which he is chairman, by mutual consent. He will receive a £2.9 million pay off. Page 25

Healthcare: Guardian Royal Exchange is to pay £435 million for PPP, which has 28 per cent of the healthcare market. Page 25

Markets: The FTSE 100 fell 12.6 points to 5908.8. The trade-weighted sterling index rose from 103.0 to 103.1 after rising from 103.35 to 103.457 and from DM2.9151 to DM2.9165. Page 28

Football: Manchester United have been drawn against Monaco in the European Cup quarter-finals

In other competitions Chelsea play Real Betis and Aston Villa play Atlético Madrid. Page 48

Rugby union: English clubs are prepared to withdraw from the Heineken Cup, the leading competition in Europe, next season unless its structure is changed. Page 48

Boxing: Kevin Kelley, facing Naseem Hamed at Madison Square Garden, cannot understand why a Brooklyn boxer should get second billing to a Briton. Page 46

Rugby league: The British amateur association has appointed Jackie Sheldon as its first national development officer for the women's game. Page 42

Alone again: Heading the week's movie releases is Home Alone 3

now with a new leading man-child, but with all the same old formatted excesses. Page 34

Souped up: However the future may judge Andy Warhol, the giant of Pop Art, a new show in Dublin suggests that for the present we are still impressed. Page 35

Lads' least: Since singer Louise went solo she has pulled off a marketing tour de force which makes her a favourite with children, mums, dads and the libidinous lads. Page 36

Winter wonderland: At the Birmingham Repertory Theatre they're basking in the warm glow of a £5.7 million Arts Council windfall. How it will be spent. Page 37

Medical report: Dr Thomas Stuttaford reports on red wine, smoking, sleeping policemen, scanners and the Two Fat Ladies

Page 18

Shalom: The murder of an Israeli soldier by Hamas led his mother to a peace mission. Page 19

Not forever: Diamonds and a material girl can spell trouble at the end of an affair. Page 19

Numbers drain: Why do accountants fail to take senior management to task for their performances? Page 33

Life-enhancing: Times reviewers discuss the books that have most influenced them. Pages 38, 39

TOMORROW IN THE TIMES

■ MEDIA
One hour of *Men Behaving Badly*: Why is the Christmas TV schedule so bad?

■ EDUCATION
Will the Schools Bill really give parents a voice in their children's education?

The US should not get involved in the broadening of the EU because it has never understood anything of Brussels' complicated business. It is probably furthering its own interests and views European politics from a militaristic strategic standpoint. — *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*

Though Madeleine Albright's visit to Africa demonstrated American interest and broadly defended democratic principles, she too often glossed over the abusive practices of leaders she met, most notably Laurent Kabila of Congo. — *The New York Times*

Preview: Is there a human cost to animal conservation? *Score Stories* (BBC2, 9.25pm). Review: Joe Joseph on what it takes to be a Promenader. Page 41

Our island story

As we approach the millennium, history, of all disciplines, should be our protection against those who see only one moral in our island story. Page 2

Imprudent Prudent

Embarrassment is no longer an effective sanction in the City. There is barely a major insurance company that has not been named and shamed by its legal regulator. Page 21

High spirits

To a Russian, vodka has almost mythical qualities, and the greater the amount on hand, the larger the myth. Page 2

WILLIAM REES-MOGG

The Franco-German alliance is a marriage in which Mariage may lack the physical strength but still wears cultural trousers. Page 20

FRANK PROCHASKA

Denying tax exemptions to all charitable institutions would mean that many would close, and others would never emerge. Page 26

PETER RIDDELL

The Neil committee on Standards in Public Life is asking the right questions about party funding. But the consultative paper issued yesterday underlines how hard it will be to produce answers which command cross-party support. Page 18

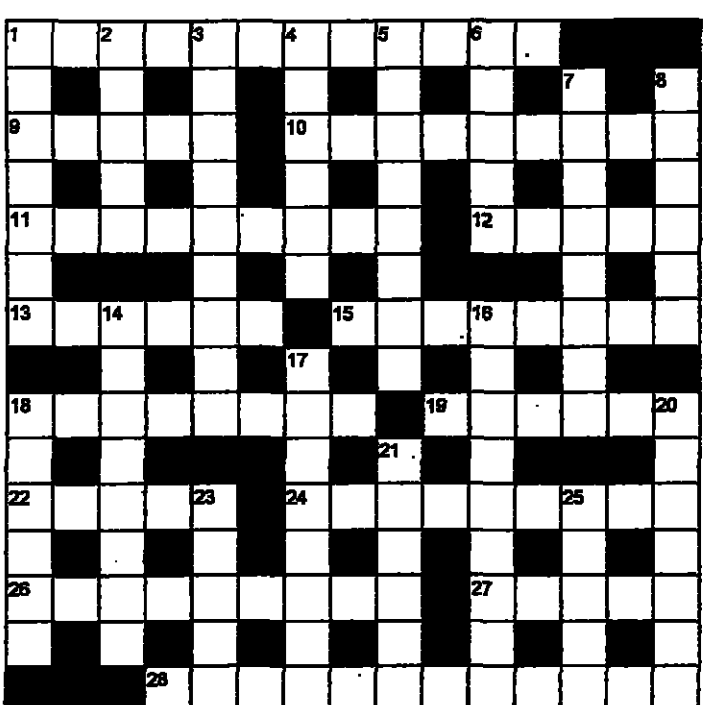
JOHN BRYANT

Sport has always had its helping of fat boys and, as long as they have been able to produce great performances, they have been loved and respected by players and spectators alike. Page 45

Rudolf Behre, Marxist intellectual; Richard Vernon, actor; Nicholas Poulos, explorer; Barry Brook, musicologist. Page 23

Welfare benefits; labour rebels; recovering those lost at sea; EU option for Turkey and Cyprus; working for Maxwell; Britannia; beef; opera committee. Page 21

THE TIMES CROSSWORD NO 20,666



ACROSS

- 1 Did they pursue the head of the arch-criminals? (8,4).
- 9 Run he scrambled as India's key man once (5).
- 10 Repetitive notes about a private conversation (4-1-4).
- 11 Liquor and other drink found in part of Manchester (9).
- 12 Mussorgsky's first trio one combined with Schubert's second, possibly (5).
- 13 TV series cost one million when broadcast? (6).
- 15 Sound of some fearful demon bidden to appear (8).
- 18 Early indication of spring avalanche (8).
- 19 The antithesis of fast food in France? (6).
- 22 American rejected his awful foreign cuisine (5).

Solution to Puzzle No 20,665

SPOTLIT NOTICES
LECTORAL PLASMA
PULSE IN LONDON
BREAKING POINT
FIGHTING
THROUGHOUT
BREATHER
IT LAY
FRESH FLAVOUR
EYES
TIME AFTER TIME
CIRCULAR
RULER ACUTABOVE
EEN
DISUSED DILEMMA

- 24 Improvise and store fruit outside (4,2,3).
- 26 Give rough treatment to crew beside hold (9).
- 27 Spirit is what makes reception a success, we hear (5).
- 28 French playwright taking tea in Welsh castle (12).

DOWN

- 1 Cows have little relative movement (7).
- 2 Throwing out hooray after getting rid of right lion (5).
- 3 In front end of Jumbo, travelled, say, a major route (5,4).
- 4 Plant turning out car for race (6).
- 5 Stop what you're doing and save crossword for later? (3,2,3).
- 6 Hymn initially sung in token of victory (5).
- 7 Some brothers in king's city (8).
- 8 Prepared for safe winter flight, decide to take off (6).
- 14 A lot of free handouts (8).
- 16 Extremely neat French type of wine after second European summit (4,5).
- 17 Ceremony I carry out with university's former president (8).
- 18 Edible plant used for entree (6).
- 20 Extra vestment keeping ice off us (7).
- 21 Equipment for producing pictures arrived with artist (6).
- 23 Showing anger that's about desert (5).
- 25 Essayist penning final letter for flower-girl (5).

Times Two Crossword, page 48

Latest Road and Weather conditions

UK Weather - All regions 0236 444 410
UK Roads - All regions 0236 401 410
Wales 0236 401 410
Ireland 0236 401 410
Northern Ireland 0236 401 410
Channel crossing 0236 401 410
Weather by Fax 0236 401 410

World City Weather 0236 411 116
153 destinations world wide
by Phone dial 0236 411 116
by Fax (india page) 0236 411 6333

Motorway 0236 401 410
European road code 0236 401 410
Support information 0236 401 410
Leisure 0236 401 410

Car reports by fax

new and used car reports from the AA menu of 195 cars
0236 416 399
Dial from your handset
you may have to see to get receive mode

HIGHEST & LOWEST

Yesterday: Highest day temp: Penzance, Cornwall, 16°C; lowest day temp: Buxton, Derbyshire, 0°C; highest rainfall: Targu, Devon, 0.81in; highest sunshine: Guernsey, Channel Islands, 5hr

NEWSPAPERS SUPPORT RECYCLING

Recycled paper made up 43.6% of the raw material for UK newspapers in the second half of 1996

TOP OF THE POPS
What makes Celine Dion's most popular private health scheme? Comprehensive cover, value-for-money, and the best customer service of them all.
OWPA
Western Province Association
FREECALL 0500 41 42 43

General

General: Rain will affect all parts during the day, with any snow left over the Scottish mountains, soon disappearing. Western Scotland should be dry for a while, but most of the country will stay cloudy and damp, and some of the rain will be heavy. It will be mild but windy. In southwest England and Wales, the rain will clear to sunshine and scattered showers for the afternoon. Later, cloud and rain will clear eastwards from all parts, with scattered showers following on western coasts and mist and fog forming.
London, SE England, E Anglia, Central S England, E Midlands, E England, W Midlands, NW England, Lake District, Isle of Man, Central N England, NE England: mostly dull and wet with outbreaks of rain, some heavy. There will be a fresh strong southeasterly wind. Much milder than recently, max 11C (52F).
Channel Isles, SW England, S Wales, N Wales: heavy rain and strong winds will clear eastwards during the morning. The afternoon will be bright with scattered showers. A strong southeasterly wind will veer moderate southerly. Much milder than recently, max 13C (55F).
Borders, Edinburgh & Dundee, Aberdeen, SW Scotland, Glasgow, Central Highlands, Argyll: mostly dull and overcast with outbreaks of rain, some heavy. A strong southeasterly wind. Mild, max 10C (50F).
Moray Firth, NE Scotland, NW Scotland, Orkney, Shetland: it will be mainly dry to begin, but rain will spread from the south later and any snow on the hills will be short-lived. There will be a strong to gale force southeasterly wind. Mild, max 9C (48F).
N Ireland: heavy rain will clear from the east during the morning and sunshine and showers will follow. A strong southeasterly wind will veer fresh southerly. Max 11C (52F).
Republic of Ireland: heavy rain clearing during the morning then milder with sunny intervals and a few showers. Wind moderate, southeasterly. Max 11C (52F).
Outlook: relatively mild but unsettled, with showers and sunshine.

AROUND BRITAIN YESTERDAY

24 hrs to 5 pm: b=bright; c=cloud; d=dizzle; ds=drizzle; s=sunny; m=moderate; f=fog; g=gale; h=heat; t=rain; a=atmospheric; s=sea; w=wind; l=low; h=high

| | hrs | m | C | F | G | H | T |
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| Angus | 0.1 | 0.01 | 4 | 39 | du | 1 | 43 |
| Armagh | 0.1 | 0.01 | 4 | 39 | du | 1 | 43 |
| Avon | 0.1 | 0.01 | 4 | 39 | du | 1 | 43 |
| Belfast | 0.1 | 0.01 | 4 | 39 | du | 1 | 43 |
| Birmingham | 1.3 | 0.04 | 5 | 41 | an | 2 | 45 |
| Bognor R | 0.1 | 0.01 | 4 | 39 | du | 1 | 43 |
| Bournemouth | 0.1 | 0.01 | 4 | 39 | du | 1 | 43 |
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| Cardiff | 0.1 | 0.01 | 4 | 39 | du | 1 | 43 |
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| Central S Wales | 0.1 | 0.01 | 4 | 39 | du | 1 | 43 |
| Central N Wales | 0.1 | 0.01 | 4 | 39 | du | 1 | 43 |
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THE TIMES

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BUSINESS EDITOR Patience Wheatcroft

THURSDAY DECEMBER 18 1997

Royal Bank buys leasing group

Angel Trains earns £400m for Nomura

By ARTHUR LEATHLEY
TRANSPORT
CORRESPONDENT

NOMURA International is to make a profit of almost £400 million on the sale of Angel Train Contracts, the privatised rolling stock leasing company, it emerged yesterday.

Nomura and its consortium partners, who acquired Angel from the Government just over two years ago, is selling the business to the Royal Bank of Scotland for £395 million.

Although Nomura paid the Government £696 million, it is understood to have subsequently earned some £600 million through securitisation of existing leasing contracts, giving a "clean" profit of £389 million on yesterday's disposal.

John Pridoux, a former British Rail director, is expected to earn £15 million for his 5 per cent shareholding in the consortium. Dr Pridoux, a train buff who is thought to have made some £50 million after selling most of his stake in Angel last year, is expected to remain with the company.

Dr Pridoux, an author of several guides for train enthusiasts and a former managing director of British Rail's InterCity division, was once tipped as a future chairman of British Rail, but he left the nationalised industry after clashing with fellow directors over plans for the Channel Tunnel rail link.

Nomura has an 85 per cent stake in Angel. The rest is held by Babcock & Brown, the US consulting engineering firm.

The move by Royal Bank marks a direct attempt to



Pridoux wealthy train buff

challenge Forward Trust, the leasing arm of HSBC Holdings, which bought another train leasing company, Eversholt, early this year. Angel owns about 3,000 of the 11,000 trains belonging to the three leasing companies set up before privatisation.

"The Royal Bank is anxious to expand its leasing activities, having previously jointly financed rolling stock for London Underground's Northern Line in 1995, and has investments in other rolling stock projects.

The purchase marks the latest in a round of acquisitions of the three rolling stock companies which were privatised last year. As well as Eversholt's purchase by Forward Trust, for £226 million, the third leasing company, Porterbrook, was bought in September last year by Stagecoach, coach and train operator, for £825 million. The purchase was almost £300 million more than the company's management paid seven months earlier when the

Government privatised Porterbrook, prompting widespread accusations that rolling stock had been sold too cheaply by a Conservative Government anxious to complete railway privatisation before the general election.

Dr George Mathewson, chief executive of the Royal Bank Group, said yesterday: "This is a significant acquisition which offers a number of exciting opportunities. It will have an immediate positive impact on our group earnings per share and return on equity, and will be funded from our own resources without recourse to shareholders."

However, rail industry observers are increasingly sceptical about the future profitability of rolling stock leasing companies, which are believed by many to have had their best period during the early months of privatisation.

Although the companies are not under regulatory control, ministers have called the sale "the last great train robbery" and made clear their intention to take a tougher hold on them when new regulation of the industry is introduced under a strategic rail authority.

Iain Robinson, managing director of the Royal Bank's corporate and institutional banking arm, insisted that there remained a strong future for the leasing companies. Significant investment in new railway rolling stock will be required over the next ten years as passenger demand grows on the back of the Government's stated intention of developing rail travel, he said.

Commentary, page 27



Richard Oster was credited with turning Cookson round but profits collapsed last year

Cookson chairman goes with £2.9m payoff

By PAUL DURMAN

RICHARD OSTER, the highly paid American who has run Cookson Group for the past six years, is to be paid £2.9 million in compensation after boardroom disagreements cost him his job — less than three months since he moved up from chief executive to chairman.

Cookson, which makes speciality chemicals and other materials used in industry, said friction arose when Stephen Howard, who took over as chief executive in October, drew up plans for disposals and for scaling down the company's US office in Rhode Island.

Bob Malpas, who has returned as an interim chair-

The targets we set are very demanding, while many companies routinely pay out 30 per cent to 40 per cent as bonuses, which are as easy to collect as putting your tie on in the morning.

Richard Oster, in April 1995, defending his £1.25 million pay package

Commentary, page 27

BUSINESS TODAY

STOCK MARKET

| | | |
|----------------|----------|-----------|
| FTSE 100 | 5190.2 | (-12.6) |
| Yield | 3.13% | |
| FTSE All share | 2427.08 | (-4.48) |
| Nikkei | 18841.06 | (+505.85) |
| New York | | |
| Dow Jones | 7987.50 | (+11.19) |
| S&P Composite | 970.32 | (+2.28) |

US RATE

| | | |
|---------------|---------|-----------|
| Federal Funds | 5 1/4% | (5 1/4%) |
| Long Bond | 102 1/2 | (102 1/2) |
| Yield | 8.98% | (8.97%) |

LONDON MONEY

| | | |
|-----------------|---------|-----------|
| 3-mth interbank | 7 1/4% | (7 1/4%) |
| Life long gilt | 12 1/4% | (12 1/4%) |

STERLING

| | | |
|----------|---------|----------|
| New York | 1.6510* | (1.6505) |
|----------|---------|----------|

US DOLLAR

| | | |
|-----------------|---------|----------|
| London | | |
| DM | 1.7715* | (1.7815) |
| FF | 5.501* | (5.9715) |
| SP | 1.6341* | (1.6465) |
| Yen | 127.15* | (130.77) |
| £ Index | 107.5 | (108.0) |
| Tokyo close Yen | 127.03 | |

EURO DOLLAR

| | | |
|-------|--------|----------|
| 3-mth | 5 1/4% | (5 1/4%) |
|-------|--------|----------|

BRIT 15-day (Mar)

| | | |
|--|--------|----------|
| | £17.50 | (£17.45) |
|--|--------|----------|

SCOTIA

| | | |
|--------------|----------|------------|
| London close | \$287.05 | (\$285.25) |
|--------------|----------|------------|

* denotes midday trading price

Jobless fall

Unemployment fell by a further 21,000 during November to 1,442,100, the lowest for 17 years. The jobless total peaked five years ago at 1,539 million. The overall seasonally adjusted unemployment rate fell to 5.1 per cent, again the lowest since 1980. Page 26

Thamesport

Rutland Trust, the mini-conglomerate, yesterday sold Thamesport, the deep-water container terminal on the Isle of Grain, Kent, for £112 million to Hutchison, the Hong Kong ports giant. Page 30, Tempus 28

Dispute threatens to split Andersen

By ROBERT BRUCE

ANDERSEN WORLDWIDE, the world's biggest professional services organisation, looks certain to be split asunder by a bitter dispute between its accountancy and consulting businesses.

In a flurry of bitter recriminations, Andersen Consulting has taken the first steps towards separating from Arthur Andersen, the accountants.

Andersen Consulting is furious at the amount of revenue it hands over to Arthur Andersen. More than \$100 million (£60 million) was passed across last year under a partnership agreement dominated by Arthur Andersen, which controls the board of Andersen Worldwide. Vernon Ellis, Andersen Consulting's managing director, Europe, Middle East, Africa and India, said: "Arthur Andersen have

behaved as though they have a mystical right to the money." Andersen Consulting has cited "serious breaches of contract and irreconcilable differences" with Arthur Andersen. The firm wants an arbitrator to resolve the dispute.

The move comes after a year of increasing internal strife at the firms, which have sought to stick together under Andersen Worldwide. The friction has been fuelled by the phenomenal growth of Andersen Consulting, a separate business unit since 1989. Arthur Andersen itself has moved aggressively into the consultancy business, triggering the current bust-up.

This week almost 1,000 Andersen Consulting partners voted for arbitration.

Accountancy, page 33

Falling sales raise fears for retailers

By ALASDAIR MURRAY

HIGH STREET sales growth slowed sharply in November, raising fears that the Christmas shopping season may prove a disappointment for retailers.

Retail sales fell 0.4 per cent in November, cutting the annual rate of growth to 4.8 per cent from 6.4 per cent in October. The largest falls took place in the clothing and footwear sector, with sales down 2.9 per cent, which analysts blamed on recent mild weather.

However, in a clear signal that windfall spending has declined dramatically, household goods sales fell 3.7 per cent in the quarter — the largest fall in more than ten years. The Office for National Statistics said the quarterly rate fell to 0.2 per cent, the lowest figure for two years. Commentary, page 27

GRE pays £560m for PPP Healthcare Group

By MARIANNE CURPHEY, INSURANCE CORRESPONDENT

GUARDIAN Royal Exchange, the insurance company, is buying PPP Healthcare Group, the second-largest private medical insurer. GRE is paying £435 million in cash, with the vendors also receiving a £125 million dividend from PPP, making a total of £560 million. PPP has a 30 per cent share of the health insurance market and is owned by a charity. The payment, which includes goodwill of £141 million, will go straight to the charity — the PPP Healthcare Medical Trust. GRE beat off competition from GE Capital and Halifax to complete the deal.

Although GRE said the deal gave it "a very significant platform in the UK private medical insurance market", it acknowledged that sales over the past few years had been

flat. Derek Rome, director of corporate affairs, said: "Growth was indeed faster in the 1980s and the removal of tax relief in the last Budget caused some people to lapse. However, according to our estimate, the total market will grow from premium income of £1.7 billion to £2.1 billion by 2000."

John Robins, GRE chief executive, said: "We are determined that the group will be a leader in the sector in the UK and selected overseas markets." Bupa, PPP's rival healthcare provider, has a market share of about 45 per cent in the UK. PPP has spent £10 million in the past two years on a brand marketing campaign directed as much at the City and potential buyers as prospective policyholders. In spite of

this outlay, PPP healthcare showed a profit before tax of £84 million for the first nine months of this year, of which £67 million was from investment gains. Its net asset value was £419 million.

By integrating the Guardian Health division into PPP, GRE expects to make annual cost savings of £14 million. About 100 jobs are expected to be lost. The acquisition is expected to bring returns from 1999.

GRE said that overall UK trading conditions were tough, particularly in the area of large property losses, including a single loss of 15 million on a fire claim in October. These factors will be reflected in trading results for the year ending December 31.

Tempus, page 28

NPC plans demerger as flotation postponed

By PAUL DURMAN

NATIONAL Parking Corporation, the owner of National Car Parks, has postponed its stock market flotation yet again, and is to demerge Green Flag, its vehicle breakdown business.

NPC, which is 73 per cent owned by its founders, Ronald Hobson and Sir Donald Gosling, was planning to float next year — 23 years on from its first attempt to come to the stock market. But it has now decided that a demerger of Green Flag is the first priority for maximising shareholder value.

Bob Mackenzie, chief executive, said NPC intends to demerge Green Flag in the first half of next year. Its shares will initially trade on the Oxfex matched bargain market, where NPC is traded,

but the intention is to eventually proceed to a full market listing.

NPC believes Green Flag, sponsor of the England football team, has good potential to grow beyond its existing turnover of £140 million a year, particularly by moving into plumbing and other non-motor help services. NPC is more mature, although Mr Mackenzie sees opportunities in expanding overseas and in UK local authorities seeking to limit on-street parking.

Mr Mackenzie said the demerger plans were not intended to realise money for Mr Hobson and Sir Donald. He pointed out that NPC has in the past two years paid two special dividends totalling £225 million, of which about £162 million went to the now

elderly founders. This year's interim dividend rises 20 per cent to 3p a share.

NPC, whose confusing name will eventually disappear, has shelved plans to float NPC. Mr Mackenzie said the US parking market is undergoing considerable change and parts of Europe are also starting to look encouraging.

NPC reported a 25.5 per cent in its interim pre-tax profits to £26 million on turnover 4.2 per cent higher at £183.9 million. Part of the 17.3 per cent improvement in operating profits to £29.9 million was because of a change in depreciation policy.

Promotional spending on Green Flag left its profits flat.

Commentary, page 27



Flying the flag: Glen Hoddie, the England coach

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Fischer reveals aims for Springer empire

By Raymond Snoddy
Media Editor

GUS FISCHER, the new chairman and chief executive of Axel Springer, Europe's largest publishing group, is planning radical change at the company to increase efficiency, invest more in group titles and make it a more international company.

Mr Fischer, an executive of German-Swiss origin based in the UK and who is former chief executive of News International, publisher of *The Times*, will take over at the German group on January 1.

"I didn't want to get involved but they didn't let up and in the end I caved in," says 58-year-old Mr Fischer, who left News International two years ago.

Before his resignation, he was also chief operating officer of News Corporation, the parent company of News International.

Mr Fischer explained yesterday that he had three main goals for the German publishing group, which has a cash pile of around DM300 million (£275 million).

"I am going to have to look at the publishing process. There are more than 12,000 employees in Germany alone," said Mr Fischer, who was well known at News International for his intention to the detail of costs.

In particular, German print unions are still much more powerful than their UK equivalents and are now likely to have to face a process of modernisation.

Axel Springer's interests range from *Bild* Zeitung and *Die Welt* to *Der Spiegel* magazine, apart from many regional newspapers.

Mr Fischer said he plans to invest some of the savings from greater efficiencies in the products which he believes have become rather conservative in design and appearance.

"We will have to look very carefully at all the products," said Mr Fischer, whose career has included running newspaper equipment companies in the US.

The third challenge, he said, is to make Axel Springer, whose media interests are largely confined to the German-speaking world, more international.

Media investments in the UK were even a possibility.

"It is a market I know well," said Mr Fischer, who plans to keep his house in London, although much of his working life in future will be spent commuting between Hamburg and Berlin, the two centres of the Axel Springer empire.

Berlin, in particular, he believes, is going to be the capital of Middle Europe.

The new chairman and chief executive of Axel Springer would also like to try to ensure that *Die Welt* is "the number one German language paper in the world".

Ministers urge pay restraint as unemployment hits 17-year low

By Philip Bassett, Industrial Editor

THE Government yesterday said wage moderation was "essential" for the health of the economy as unemployment fell by a further 21,000 and earnings growth remained stable.

The clear call by ministers underlines concern in Whitehall that falling unemployment threatens an upsurge in inflation. However, ministers also insisted that the latest decline in unemployment was beneficial for jobseekers and for the economy generally.

The renewed pressure for wage moderation came as the number of people out of work and claiming benefit fell in November to 1,442,000. The drop takes the seasonally adjusted claimant count to its lowest level for 17 years, and takes the overall fall in unemployment since its peak five years ago to 1,539 million.

Claimant unemployment fell in all regions, and for both men and women. Unadjusted unemployment—the actual number of people out of work and claiming benefit—was down 45,184 to 1,387,649. The overall

seasonally adjusted unemployment rate fell marginally to 5.1 per cent—again the lowest since 1980.

Whitehall suggested that the figures were consistent with a downward trend in unemployment towards the middle of the Office for National Statistics estimate of a fall of 15,000 to 35,000 a month. The latest monthly fall came as

average earnings growth remained stable, with underlying earnings rising 4.25 per cent in the year to October, the same level as September, and indeed for the past six months, though manufacturing industry earnings ticked up a quarter of a point after revisions to last month's figures.

The figures prompted ministers to renew calls for re-

sponsibility over wages. While welcoming the fall in unemployment as "good news for those moving into jobs and for the economy", Andrew Smith, the Employment Minister, said: "Moderation in earnings growth is essential if economic growth is to continue delivering extra jobs and not just higher earnings for those already in work." He said: "The

prize of sustainable growth and lower unemployment depends on keeping inflationary pressures firmly under control." But ministerial calls were somewhat undercut by an analysis of labour market statistics by Whitehall economists, who said: "There is no sign of a take-off in pay settlements and retail and producer price inflation are low, though 'core' inflation is marginally above the Government's target."

Ministers said that still-high unemployment among men and especially among young people showed the importance of the Welfare to Work programme, with David Blunkett, Education and Employment Secretary, yesterday announcing a further 14 employers signing up to the New Deal.

Employment rose 73,000 in the quarter to September by 26,595,000, separate new figures showed yesterday. But further new data showed redundancies continuing, with 187,000 people made redundant in the three months to August.

Japanese moves welcomed

By Alasdair Murray, Economics Correspondent

THE JAPANESE Government yesterday unveiled a plan to pay an income tax rebate of 2 trillion yen (£9.5 billion) in a bid to kick-start the country's flagging economy.

Hiroshi Mitsuoka, the Finance Minister, said the rebate would form part of a package of economic stimulus measures—worth a total of about 5 trillion yen (£24.5 billion)—which should be finalised by the end of the week.

The unexpected tax cut was warmly welcomed in the markets, with the Nikkei 225 index surging 5 per cent to close at 16,516.68.

The battered yen also received a boost after the Bank of Japan intervened in the market for

the first time in five years. Dealers believe the BoJ sold about \$1 billion, helping the yen to climb from ¥131.8 against the dollar to ¥125.85.

The stimulus measures boosted markets elsewhere in Asia and received support from abroad. The US described the package as "good for Japan and good for the whole Asian region".

Economists welcomed the package as a step in the right direction, but cautioned that the Japanese economy was still a long way from recovery. The rise in the value of the yen is expected to prove short-lived, with economists predicting it will head towards 140 to the dollar in the coming weeks.

Candover fund brings in £850m

By Jason Nisse

CANDOVER Investments, the venture capital house, yesterday raised £850 million for its latest investment fund—£200 million more than it had projected when the fund was launched in June.

More than half the money has come from US investors, 27 per cent from UK fund managers and 13 per cent from continental Europe. Candover expected to invest about two-thirds in the UK, with the rest in France and Germany.

The strong response comes after the success of Candover's two previous funds. The 1989 fund has already repaid all its investors with a handsome profit and the 1994 fund has already returned 72 per cent of the £307 million it raised.

Stephen Curran, chief executive, said the size of the new fund would give Candover greater flexibility. "We can now underwrite £200 million of equity in a deal on our own."

Tempus, page 28



Stephen Curran, chief executive, left, with Colin Buffin, a fellow Candover director

Chairman of select committee blames Budge

By Christine Buckley
Industrial Correspondent

MARTIN O'NEILL, chairman of the Commons Trade and Industry Select Committee, yesterday launched a stinging attack on Richard Budge, chief executive of RJB Mining, accusing him of mismanagement.

Mr O'Neill, who in the new year will publish the committee's report on the future of coal, said the recent crisis would not have reached the state it had if it had not been for RJB's handling of contract negotiations. He told a Coalfield Communities Campaign meeting: "The crisis was caused by the ineptitude of RJB... they only have a handful of customers and they seem to have offended all of them."

But he also criticised the electricity generators in what could signal break-up recommendations in the committee's report. Mr O'Neill told the meeting of miners, union leaders and MPs that National Power and PowerGen—the two biggest generators—owned too many coal-fired power stations and more independent players should be brought in. He said: "The generating companies are going to have to be broken up."

He said they were an important piece in the coal jigsaw but that there was no effective competition in electricity price-setting.

The generators this week agreed to a government-backed deal to ensure that RJB could maintain production until the end of June. Mr O'Neill told the meeting that Mr Budge had made "grave mistakes" and that while the coal industry had been mismanaged when it was in state ownership "in certain areas of private ownership it has been mismanaged in different ways".

Oasis is now expected to make a pre-tax profit of £13 million for the year to January 31, against £15.6 million profit last time.

Market report, page 28

Oasis plunges after warning

By Fraser Nelson

SHARES in Oasis suffered their sharpest one-day fall yesterday after the fashion retailer gave warning that stiff competition and sluggish high street sales would force its profits below market expectations.

The shares dropped 56p to 130p—falling below the 165p flotation price for the first time—as analysts said the clothing chain is heading for its first profits decline.

The shares now stand at 30 per cent of their 42½p high. Eight months ago, the directors sold around £5.8 million of shares at around the 400p level.

Michael Bennett, chairman, sold £1 million of shares at 400p only weeks before the shares tumbled to 200p.

Maurice Bennett, his brother and deputy, sold £3.2 mil-

lion of shares at 400p and Vivian Scott, managing director, raised 385p a share selling a £385,000 stake.

The company said yesterday that its problems were entirely related to a general slowdown in the high street—and had nothing to do with this season's autumn/winter range from Oasis.

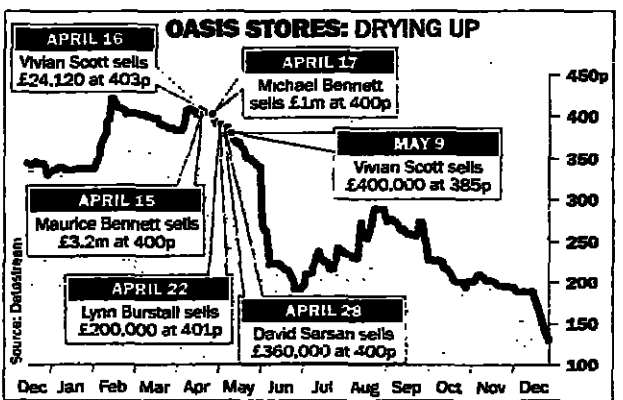
Richard Perks, analysts at Verdict Research, disagreed. He said: "The high street is not doing as badly as people are suggesting. A lot of Oasis

problems are specific to the company itself. It has had trouble with its range and if you lose the grip even a little bit that can have disastrous effects."

The company denied that the directors had capitalised on the top of the market, pointing out that they sold within weeks of being released from their handcuff deal that prevented any disposals within the first two years of flotation.

The Bennett brothers and Mr Scott still hold 33 per cent of the company's shares between them.

Oasis is now expected to make a pre-tax profit of £13 million for the year to January 31, against £15.6 million profit last time.



LEGAL & PUBLIC NOTICES

0171-782 7344

LEGAL NOTICES

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE
CHANCERY DIVISION
COMPANIES COURT
IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT 1985
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that a petition was presented to the High Court of Justice for the winding up of the company named in the schedule to this notice on 11th December 1997. The petition is supported by a statement of affairs of the company dated 11th December 1997. A copy of the petition and statement of affairs is available for inspection at the Companies Court, High Court of Justice, 10th Floor, 11th Avenue, London EC2A 4PU, from 10th December 1997 to 11th January 1998. Any creditor or contributory of the company who claims to be entitled to a dividend or to be repaid of a contribution should file a claim with the petition. The claim should be filed with the petition and should be served on the petitioner. The claim should be filed with the petition and should be served on the petitioner. The claim should be filed with the petition and should be served on the petitioner.

NOTICE OF MEETING OF THE SHAREHOLDERS OF THE COMPANY
THE SHAREHOLDERS OF THE COMPANY are hereby notified that a meeting of the shareholders of the company will be held at the registered office of the company, 10th Floor, 11th Avenue, London EC2A 4PU, on 11th January 1998 at 10.00 am. The business to be transacted at the meeting is as follows: (a) to consider and, if thought fit, to approve the accounts of the company for the year ended 31st December 1997; (b) to consider and, if thought fit, to approve the dividend for the year ended 31st December 1997; (c) to consider and, if thought fit, to approve the appointment of auditors for the year ending 31st December 1998; (d) to consider and, if thought fit, to approve the appointment of directors for the year ending 31st December 1998; (e) to consider and, if thought fit, to approve the appointment of auditors for the year ending 31st December 1998; (f) to consider and, if thought fit, to approve the appointment of directors for the year ending 31st December 1998; (g) to consider and, if thought fit, to approve the appointment of auditors for the year ending 31st December 1998; (h) to consider and, if thought fit, to approve the appointment of directors for the year ending 31st December 1998; (i) to consider and, if thought fit, to approve the appointment of auditors for the year ending 31st December 1998; 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This Angel isn't heavenly



COMMENTARY
by our City Editor

When on the opposition benches, the Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, was a virulent opponent of rail privatisation. How right he was? In hindsight, the last administration succeeded in delivering a main plank of the transport infrastructure into private hands for a knockdown price. How knockdown? is only becoming more and more apparent. Angel Trains — the third and the apparently most keenly priced of the rolling stock leasing companies (Roscos) — yesterday passed from the hands of Nomura, its original buyer, to Royal Bank of Scotland, delivering a £399 million profit in the process. That represents a compound return of 25 per cent a year. And, if you take account of the financial engineering that Nomura was able to bring to bear to the deal, the pure profit can be seen as 65.00 per cent of the risk capital. A nice deal by anyone's calculations.

Of course Angel is not the only, nor the most blatant, winner from rail privatisation. There was Everstoft and Portersbrook — the other two Roscos — Prisms, Rail, Stagecoach, Virgin Trains, ScotRail and the biggest money spinner of the lot, Railtrack. Even allowing for the recent fall in the share price due to the intervention of the rail regulator, John Swift, it has delivered a 50 per cent return to investors in little more than 18 months of trading on the stock market.

There are many reasons for why the rail network was sold so cheaply. And Prescott has to take his share of the blame. In opposition he always threatened to unravel privatisation once Labour was elected, so delivering what is called in the market "regulatory risk". This promise has not been fulfilled, prompting, among other things, the massive outperformance of Railtrack since May 1. But the threat pushed down prices and frightened away investors. The other person who should be blamed is John Major. He managed to hang on to power for a crucial few months longer than anyone in the industry expected, so allowing the privatisation process to get closer to completion than many involved in the process had feared might be the case.

But what is the regulatory risk these days? Given Gordon Brown's tough spending constraint, Labour is severely restricted in what it might be able to do about renationalisation. It can only use the rail regulator to reconstruct the potential returns privatised groups make. This he is doing. The regulatory review Swift published last week indicated that the new regime will be much more strict when determining what rate of return

the rail companies are allowed to take. Rail fares will be kept in check. Subsidies will be cut. The good times may well be over.

So is this a good time for Royal Bank to buy into rail leasing? It beat off a bid from GE Capital, the world expert in this area, which was unhappy that it missed out on a Rosco the first time around. This indicates that Royal Bank has played over the top for a business with declining prospects.

Oster rich thanks to Cookson crew

For all the many, many hours that highly paid people have spent drawing up corporate governance codes, one has to wonder whether any real progress has been made. Today's lesson comes from Cookson Group. Richard Oster, the all-American chairman familiarly described as a cigar-

chomping former college football star, has "mutually agreed" with his board room colleagues that the industrial materials company would be much better off without him. To ease the pain of parting, Oster has been given £2.9 million of shareholders' money to keep him company back home in Rhode Island.

Now, despite Cookson's dismal share price performance over the last two years, this is not strictly a reward for failure. Cookson looked in danger of going under before Oster took over back in 1991. But he has already been amply rewarded, being paid £1 million or more in each of the last four years.

What should really stick in investors' crawls is that Oster only signed a new three-year contract last March — only a few months before he moved from chief executive to chairman. Not one of life's natural non-executives, Oster found the transition difficult, particularly when the

new chief executive made moves to offload some of Oster's pet businesses and scale down the US head office, which just happens to be in Rhode Island. Cookson portrays this as a friendly disagreement but it was sufficiently concerned to call back the only recently departed Bob Malpas, 70, as an interim chairman.

Why, when most big companies are adopting 12-month contracts, did Malpas agree to Oster's new three-year deal so shortly before a fundamental change in his responsibilities? To claim, as Malpas attempts, that Cookson has done well by resisting the more outrageous demands of Oster's American lawyers is ridiculous.

More fundamentally, the causes of Oster's departure raise questions about the degree of influence he was allowed to exercise and the balance of powers within the Cookson board. Stephen Howard, the new

chief executive, has been a Cookson director for five years and presumably supported building up the portfolio of businesses he is now dismantling. In these days of managerial professionalism, how come Howard did not make his feeling felt about the balance of business in Cookson while Oster was still in charge?

Beckett should park at NCP

If Margaret Beckett wants to court friends in the business community, she could do worse than ask the Monopolies & Mergers Commission to investigate the National Parking Corporation. Few senior executives, and even few people who have ever driven a car in London, have any love for the company's ubiquitous National Car Parks subsidiary, which owns more than 600 sites in prime locations, sites that often seem to offer the only place to park legally.

Meanwhile the group's ageing founders — Sir Donald Gosling, 69, and Ronald Hobson, 78 — continue to bolster their personal fortunes by taking special dividends out of the group while

putting off flotation plans. For the record, a market listing was first mooted for NPC way back in 1975.

The latest plan is to demerge Green Flag, the motor rescue rival to AA and RAC, and trade its shares on the unregulated Ofex market. This will release £200 million to NPC without having to reveal the full details of the group's accounts and how much money it makes from its contracts with local councils.

The only way to get these out into the open is for a full investigation into NPC's business practices, which once famously involved spying on a rival operator, a company it later bought out. Given NPC will make more than £50 million this year, enjoying margins of up to 15 per cent, the MMC is certain to have an interesting time working out whether the group operates in the public interest.

Flood of excuses

ANOTHER Christmas season brings yet another set of excuses from retailers. It seems that shoppers were not buying shoes and clothes in November because it was too warm. This follows the effect of the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, which blighted the high street September and October. Now it is too cold for the Christmas boom. So please, please, please can someone tell me, what is the ideal weather for shopping?

Lonrho ends hotel talks with prince

By Jason Nisbet

LONRHO has broken off negotiations with Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal, the Saudi investor, about the \$500 million (£303 million) sale of the Princess Hotels chain.

The mining-based conglomerate, which expected to sell the business in the new year, has sent sales memorandums to at least two other parties.

The favoured buyer is believed to be Starwood Lodging, the US group that recently bought ITC Shoppers. Other bidders are expected to include Hilton Hotels Corporation, the US partner of Ladbrooke Group, and Host Marriott. Lonrho is confident that it will receive at least the amount Prince Alwaleed was offering.

The breakdown in talks with Prince Alwaleed, whose investments include stakes in Canary Wharf and Euro Disney, comes more than six months after Lonrho signed an exclusivity deal with Prince Alwaleed, who is believed to have spent more than £5 million in fees on the aborted deal.

When Lonrho entered into the talks it desperately needed money to pay its debts. Since

then it has sold its sugar operations and yesterday completed the disposal of its car dealership operations.

This business — which includes the Dutton-Forsyth chain, Jack Barclay, the central London Rolls-Royce dealership, and the Mercedes leasing operation — is being bought by a management team backed by CVC Partners in a £113 million deal.

The team is being led by Robert Robinson, chief executive of Dutton-Forsyth, who said that that operation had a clear strategy for growth as an independent company. Rob Lucas of CVC Partners said the buyout comes at a time when the vehicle distribution market is facing dramatic change.

Lonrho is still in talks with JCI, the South African mining group, about a possible £450 million purchase of the company. However reports from South Africa indicate a split in the JCI board, with Mzi Khamalo, the chairman, fighting internal opposition to press ahead with the Lonrho deal. Lonrho is also working on a demerger of its African trading operations.

Standard Life joins banks battle for savers

By Susan Emmett

STANDARD LIFE, Europe's largest mutual life assurance company, yesterday announced it was taking on the banks with the launch of a savings account. It is the latest in a long line of newcomers to challenge the traditional high street banks, including Sainsbury's, Tesco and Virgin.

The new telephone-based account will offer a rate of 6.76 per cent on balances of as little as £1. The supermarkets pay 6.5 per cent, one of the highest rates in the market for small savers.

Jim Spowart, managing director of Standard Life Bank, said that the account would remain competitive because, as a direct service, it would not have to maintain a branch network.

The Standard Life direct access savings account, which will be launched on January 5, will initially be aimed at individuals, but there are plans to extend it to business.

The group also plans to launch fixed-term savings accounts and will bring in mortgages, followed by personal loans next summer.

Zeneca to acquire fungicide business

By Paul Durman

ZENECA is planning to strengthen its agrochemicals division by spending \$500 million (£303 million) to acquire an American-based fungicide business and additional product distribution rights.

The pharmaceuticals group has agreed a deal with Ishihara Sangyo Kaisha of Japan to buy ISK Biosciences, which makes chlorothalonil, one of the world's biggest-selling fungicides.

Zeneca believes that this will complement its own Amistar, the recently launched broad spectrum fungicide that it expects to become the international market leader by the year 2000.

Zeneca intends that its farming customers should alternate Amistar with chlorothalonil, thus helping to prevent crops developing resistance.

The City liked the deal, sending Zeneca's shares 49p higher to £20.77.

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COMPANY.

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STOCK MARKET

FRASER NELSON

Bank rally peters out as chill winds hit retailers

LONDON'S blue chips paused for breath yesterday on a sudden dearth of hype in the financial sector. Unrest among the retailers saw the FTSE 100 retreat slightly, but remain within striking distance of its 5,300 high.

The index eased 12.6 points, to 5,190.8 yesterday, as early gains in Wall Street soon vanished, leaving the City to reconsider takeover speculation that had lifted retail banks to record highs.

Abbey National saw an abrupt end to its week-long bull run by dropping 44p to close at £11.03. With it fell Barclays, down 50p to £17. Abbey National, down 44p to £11.03, and Alliance & Leicester, down 10p to 81p.

A profits warning from Oasis Stores, down 56p to 130p, allowed Société Générale — its house broker — to turn negative on the whole sector. With official data showing a retail volume slump in November, the City needed no further excuse to knock down almost every quoted retailer.

Marks & Spencer was worst hit, dropping 20p back to 600p. The food retailers came in right behind it, with Tesco losing 16p to 488p. Sainsbury's further 8p to 529p and J Sainsbury 10 1/2p to 509 1/2p. Asda, which announces its half-year results today, softened 3 1/2p to 170 1/2p.

Base was the best performer of the day, gaining 37p to a high of 93p. Goldman Sachs said it was still further to go, with a value of £11.50.

Nevertheless, Diageo was given a cold reception as the merged Guinness and Grand Metropolitan finished its first day 1 1/2p cheaper at 590p. Scottish & Newcastle gained 20p to close at 788p, while Whitbread advanced 23p to 897p.

Ina Business, a brewing minnow, moved up 2p to 59 1/2p on suggestions that it is looking vulnerable at a low of 57 1/2p, while the rest of the UK brewing sector rallied.

The result was a 12.6 point drop in the FTSE 100, which closed at 5,190.8 points after 870 million shares changed hands. The drop came in spite of predictions by Merrill Lynch that the index will achieve a minimum of 5,400 next year as lots more money from European equity houses chase for fewer shares.

It forecast that Railtrack's phenomenal run has further to go. The company's shares



Base, up 37p, was best performer while Diageo lost 1 1/2p

immediately jumped 17p to 967p. It also named Lloyds TSB, up 13p to 789p, as one of 1998's most promising stocks, along with Ladbroke, off 3 1/2p to 271 1/2p and British Aerospace, off 19p to £17.12. It also reckons Imperial Tobacco is "incredibly cheap" — the shares edged ahead 3 1/2p to 401p.

UBS's wish list, released last week, has had a mixed

reception so far. The broker

fancies Mayflower, 1 1/2p easier

at 179p, UniChem, off 5p

at 319 1/2p, N Brown, steady at

421 1/2p, Great Portland Es-

tates, off 1 1/2p to 253p, and

Gallagher, 9 1/2p stronger at

364p.

Its most successful tip has

been Logica, the computer

services company recovering

from a summer slump. The

shares broke the £1 level after

adding 18 1/2p to £11.10 after

SBC Warburg joined its grow-

ing fan club.

With quiet trading among

the FTSE 350 companies, deal-

ers began speculating which

companies are likely to benefit

from the City's traditional

Christmas pastime of "win-

dow-dressing".

Among those tipped to bene-

fit are Kwik, up 1 1/2p to 22 1/2p

and Greenway, steady at 44p.

Electronic Retail Systems

(ERS) was the poorest per-

former on the Alternative In-

vestment Market as the digital

supermarket price tag produc-

er fell 52 1/2p to 257 1/2p. Its

agreed takeover of Telepoint

in the US has pulled its shares

into an arbitrage trap, and

dealers have woken up to the

fact that Telepoint shares

have not yet adjusted to the

takeover terms.

A takeover bid for Seratons

has ended the shipping com-

pany's chequered history on

the junior exchange. The

shares, which have never

reached their April high of

350p, jumped from 270p to

310p a share yesterday.

The City seemed to overlook

the implications for Jacobs

Holdings, a fully-listed port

operator that owns 29 per cent

of Seratons. It picked up the

share through buying Ropers

and through Cenargo's cash bid it will

have an extra £4.45 million in

the bank. The shares, 1 1/2p off

at 80 1/2p, are expected to pick

up once the penny drops.

The shares, currently at an

11-month low, are expected to

pick up when the penny drops.

BCO Technology, which

proposes a half-year house for

microchip production, was

awarded at 10p premium on

its AIM debut and closed at

150p.

GILT-EDGED: The pros-

pect of another interest rate

rise seemed even more distant

in the futures pit, after slug-

gish retail sales figures

sparked a small retreat in both

longs and shorts.

Treasury 7 per cent 2002

closed at 101 1/2p, while Treasury 3

per cent 2021 eased 1 1/2p

to £124 1/2p.

NEW YORK: Blue chips

quickly shed most of their

early gains after 3M shares

tumbled when the company

said a fourth-quarter profits

would be dented by currency

and Asian factors. By midday

the Dow Jones industrial aver-

age was 11.19 points ahead at

7,957.50.

Closing Prices Page 32

Commodities

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Japan pioneers the new stagnation

Some incidents stick in the mind. You remember, for instance, if a Japanese business intellectual leans confidentially across the table at an expensive Tokyo bar and says: "You must become the new Keynes". Fifteen years ago, the certainty of falling in such a doomed mission did not seem too ignominious. The Japanese economy adapted quickly to the 1979 oil shock and was recovering healthily at the time.

Back home, unemployment was on the way to its postwar peak, but the economy had turned back up solidly and inflation was falling. Although a more caring approach to manufacturing would have been welcome, there was no chance of the experimental long, blunt shock to the economy being abandoned.

Fifteen years later, Japan could do with a new Keynes. Instead, it has Ryutaro Hashimoto, a pragmatic prime minister trying to do his best. To his credit, Mr Hashimoto shocked his own officials yesterday when he announced that he would propose an emergency package of tax cuts in

January, undermining their "responsible" but disastrous three-year programme of fiscal tightening. The figures look huge but are equivalent to tax cuts of about £2 billion in UK terms, useful rather than sensational.

With luck, Mr Hashimoto will undo the damage of the earlier Budget, which nipped fragile recovery in the bud. That would still leave Japan's economy floundering, eight years to the month after the start of a rolling collapse of asset prices and confidence.

As Mr Hashimoto acknowledges, stagnation in the world's second biggest economy is now inflicting heavy damage on much of the rest of East Asia, just as America's slump after the 1929 crash spread havoc in Europe and Japan. The legacy of experience, and the old Keynes ensure that Japan's misfortunes are not on the 1930s scale. The focus has been on

the financial sector, leaving unemployment at about 3½ per cent. But the plight of Japanese finance has left treble exposed those tiger economies that depended on Japanese consumer markets, investment and lending.

Officials in Tokyo have been damned for allowing banks to put off the pain of coming to terms with mountains of bad debts. But a bombed financial system can only count the cost when it has recovered enough to pay it. Tough action then boosts confidence.

Recent collapses of Yamaichi et al still have a look of weakness. Mr Hashimoto has also just proposed another bond issue to shore up faith in bank deposits.

The developing world needs a dynamic, buoyant Japan, but it is easier to explain what went wrong than to put it right. Only the Second World War lifted America out of the doldrums. Fortunately,



GRAHAM PEARSE

there is no such prospect for Japan. Unfortunately, Tokyo may point the way for the rest of us.

America and economists of the new, global orthodoxy bear some blame. They bullied Japan to internationalise the yen and deregulate financial services. But Japan kept old practices such as cartels to shore up values, helping to blow up a financial bubble and then

burst it. The bilateral trade surplus with America became such a political sore that the US became determined to hobble Japan's too-competitive manufacturers. It made sense to push the yen up and break down import barriers. But external pressure to restructure Japan's successful economy then gained such momentum that OECD economists perennially complain, for instance, that not enough small shops have yet been put out of business.

Japan's economic success was built on the ability to combine social stability with rapid change. No wonder it is not responding too well to attempts to convert it to the IMF/OECD model. Last week, OECD economists' annual report on Japan again pressed for even more of the same: a faster "big bang" deregulation of financial services to cut costs to world levels, a freer market in more transient

labour, tougher competition law. If all this succeeds, what can Japan's new generation look forward to? According to the OECD, annual growth during the period 2000 to 2025 should average just 1½ per cent. That is about half the average of the past decade and a mere fraction of that achieved in happier times. This is what we used to call stagnation. And it is not much less than predictions for Britain and Europe. Pity the prospects for the developing world if the United States does not continue to do better with the help of cheap Hispanic labour.

Japan has joined the low-growth West. We British know what low growth and free markets bring: vastly higher transitional unemployment, much wider income distribution and ever greater pressure on public finances and the social security system. In Japan, the average age of marriage has

pushed back so far that the dying are no longer being replaced, the population is ageing and orthodox dictates that public pensions and healthcare be cut.

The fall from grace may not be so bad in the rest of the developed world. Today's global economic orthodoxy, having fought the anti-inflation war, would not, however, help us win the next one, the one Japan is embroiled in. When monetary expansion fails, as in Japan, the new euro system has no fiscal alternative. If there is a downturn in the next few years, London's new independent interest rate setters will not acquire the subtlety of Alan Greenspan's US Federal Reserve in time.

There is no new Keynes, nor is there likely to be. Perhaps the macroeconomic policy revolution has played all its cards. Perhaps the internal dynamics of the 1990s American economy can eventually be translated elsewhere. Meanwhile, Japan should spurn orthodoxy, print lots of money and reward its families generously for their second and third children.

Who's afraid of the end of the bull run?

Martin Waller wonders whether the bear market is coming — or has the downturn already arrived?

It is December 1999 and the Millennium Dome is still not finished. Any jubilation within the Labour Party over the political demise of Peter Mandelson, however, is tempered by the realisation that the next election will not be anywhere near as easy to win as the last. The economy is in neutral. While no one is yet talking recession, the free-spending days of the early Blair administration seem a long way away.

In Asia, Japan is 18 months into an austerity programme imposed, humiliatingly, by the International Monetary Fund. 1998, the Year of the Tiger in the Chinese calendar, failed to live up to its billing; numerous Asian banks and conglomerates went bust. The surviving manufacturers are pumping out consumer goods at prices that Western producers cannot hope to match, given the sharp decline in Asian currencies. That currency gap and the new fashion for austerity mean no one there is buying Western luxury goods any more.

On the stock market, the FTSE 100 index is edging up towards 4,400 again. It closed 1997, the last year of the bull market, at about 5,200. By July 1998 it had fallen to 4,600, as the implications of the Asian crisis finally sank in. By the end of the year it was below 4,500; since then the market has moved sideways. A pattern has been set: weeks of progress are subsequently wiped out by a sudden 100-point fall on any piece of bad news.

Welcome to the bear market. This is not a scenario being mapped out by many equity strategists as we move towards the end of 1997. Most are shooting for a further upward march in the market.

But it is not an impossible scenario, either. And few in the City remember the last protracted bear market, when share prices marked time or gradually subsided over a period of years. There have been plenty of blips in living memory. David Schwartz is a stock market historian. He says the best definition of a bear market is a 15 per cent fall in share prices. There have

been 20 such in the UK since the First World War. Four were drops of 50 per cent or more, but these have attended special circumstances — war, depression, or the fringe bank failures, rampant trade unionism and soaring inflation in the early 1970s.

The other 16 separate neatly into two equal-sized groups, small drops of 15 to 25 per cent and larger ones ranging up to 40 per cent. Half of all these began within 30 months of a previous downturn, and proved to be fairly minor. The other half began more than 30 months after the preceding bear market had begun, and all but one, which was deflected by an election, were serious downturns.

It is dangerous to extrapolate directly from 19th-century patterns, but Mr Schwartz points out that almost four years have passed since the start of the last downturn, in February 1994. "History hints that the next downturn will probably be a medium-sized one."

Against that, bear markets can be deflected by chance events like that election. "In many different ways, the 1992 bear market was shaped up to be a monumental one," says Mr Schwartz. "You had a recession, and the pound was too high." Then came Britain's sudden exit from the European exchange-rate mechanism — the chance deflection in this case came from George Soros. "Every investor every morning should get out his prayer mat and thank Soros," he adds.

But let us assume that the above scenario maps out. The FTSE 100 index peaked at 5,330.8 on October 3. If by the end of next year it is down to 4,500, then the fall will have been 15.6 per cent in little more than a year, which fits our definition of a bear market. If the market then drifts sideways for another year, who loses and who benefits?

City professionals, surprised and inclined to view the prospect with some enthusiasm, at least for the opportunities available over the first few months, because the current high level of the markets means prices of businesses in



Few in the City, top, recall the last long downturn, in New York, right, the "tiger" may yet put the bulls to flight; George Soros deflected bears in 1992

which they trade are seen as uncomfortably high. Lower prices mean more deals, particularly if cash-rich big corporates feel free to take out their smaller, less financially stable competitors.

David Beaver, chairman of KPMG Corporate Finance, says: "There are lots of corporates praying for a bear market because they very much want to make acquisitions but they can't pay these prices because it would mean earnings dilution, and they dare not do it with debt."

A number of companies have said to me over the past four months, "I would love to have a crack at that one if the price was 10 per cent lower."

Venture capitalists, too, believe a bear market would bring advantages, though it has to be said that this breed tends to be optimistic to a fault and would probably regard the discovery of the proverbial comet on collision course with Earth as a buying opportunity. Eric Walters, of Alchemy

Partners, says: "I'm a bear as well — I find it very difficult to see why prices should go up unless people haven't anything better to do with their money. I think it's opportunity time. We had great times in previous bear markets, such as the very early 1990s, buying businesses at very reasonable prices. We were a good source of money at that time."

There are situations where the market could freeze entirely, such as happened in 1973. But I don't think that is going to happen now — the fundamentals are much stronger."

Gordon Bonnyman, managing director of Charterhouse Development Capital, thinks the current values put on companies can be dangerous. "We've got very high prices; we have, in relative terms, very low interest rates. We've got long-term debt available in the bond markets where repayments don't start for ten, 11 or 12 years. Perhaps the

worst ingredient in this lethal cocktail is that we've got a bunch of venture capitalists who believe they can do no wrong. It's a very difficult market to buy in for those reasons. If the market were to fall off to a very fair degree and then stay fallen off, that would help us tremendously."

The effect of a bear market, especially if accompanied by higher interest rates, would mean companies would be more constrained from raising fresh capital on the stock market through rights issues, and would find banking finance more expensive. But it would not preclude them from doing deals entirely.

Mr Beaver does not expect the market to set like cement if share prices fall. "I think the big mergers will continue to be driven by synergistic benefits, and people have got to do their arithmetic very carefully to see if those synergies are there."

"The corporates with strong balance sheets that need acquisitions to continue their

growth will be tempted to bid. If the market is a bit depressed then they might get away with a lower premium than the 40 per cent or so which now seems to be required."

"For companies that might have their competitors in their sights, a 10 per cent fall in the market would obviously be helpful. For small to medium-sized companies, if they find 1998 tough for whatever reason, exchange rates perhaps or more likely a slowdown in the economy, then they might find themselves in a hunting season." Mr Bonnyman, too, does not see a choking off of the sources of finance for takeovers. "I've never understood the aversion the UK institutional investor has to a bit of debt here and there. Just because values have come more into line with whatever I mean by intrinsic values doesn't mean the world stops. People can still raise money. They just get it more expensively." But he does think the pace of deals will eventually slacken. "I think the

people who will suffer will be the City — the takeover trail will cool in a bear market."

So, corporate deal-making goes on and even accelerates as the indices fall. Eventually there will be fewer deals, and fee income and bonuses spread around the City will also start to fall. The corporate sector splits into a number of large, well-financed companies with good relationships with their banks and plenty of access to further funds, and a larger number of very nervous takeover targets. An economic slowdown means their profits are squeezed, and their balance sheets come under pressure. Big institutional investors, despairing of the market dimming again, are more inclined to accept cash offers for the weaker companies.

The venture capitalists could suffer two ways. Mr Bonnyman at Charterhouse says: "We all made money in 1990s from buying mature, mundane, cash-generative businesses discarded by their

parents. Then we discovered that the companies were undervalued, and someone, the stock market or trade buyers, really loved them."

But not all those buyouts and disposals, backed by venture capitalists' cash, have been sold on or floated, so realising profits — the turbulent stock market conditions of the past couple of months have made flotations more difficult. Mr Walters at Alchemy says: "The window never completely closes even in a bear market. It's a nuisance, perhaps — you don't get a p/e of 12, you get a p/e of 11." But Mr Bonnyman is less sanguine. "If the market drops, it's self-evident that exits will be more difficult."

The bear market could also reverse what has been a noticeable trend in recent months, the virtual absence of trade buyers at auctions of businesses held by the merchant banks, and the preponderance of financial buyers like the venture capital outfits.

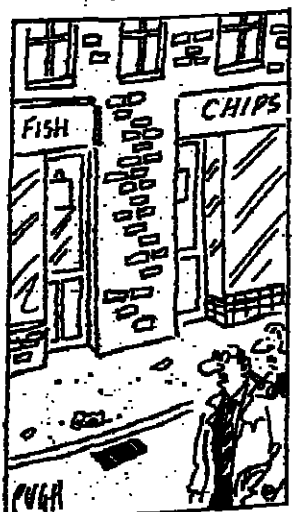
Mr Bonnyman says: "The cost of capital for a financial buyer is often lower than for corporates. Long-term high-yield bonds are available at rates that nobody could have dreamed of ten years ago, say two points over gilts. The corporates can't compete with that. "But if the stock market comes off, debt will still be available to the corporates at tolerable rates of interest, even if interest rates tick up a bit, but it will be less easy for the financials."

So the venture capitalists may have difficulty shifting their existing businesses as these come around for sale — the average holding time of such investments is four or five years, and a huge number bought in 1992 and thereafter are now becoming mature. Meanwhile, they risk being outgunned in the bear market by the corporates — or those that are financially strong enough to expand. But for one sector, the bad times may already be here. Smaller companies have spectacularly underperformed their bigger brethren on the stock market this year. Mr Walters sits on the board of three such. "Smaller public companies are already out of favour — you could find several thousand public companies where the chairman would say, the bear market has already happened."

Make a mint

IT WAS Milton Freedman, the high priest of monetarism, who said there was no such thing as a free lunch. But, like many of that economist's theories, this statement has stood the test of time, as a reader from Wimbledon has pointed out to me.

Currently the Royal Mint is offering for sale the new £5 coins at face value. They can be ordered — postage and packing free — using a credit card, so giving the purchasers air miles, bonus points or, if you possess an Alliance & Leicester card, a 2 per cent cash rebate.



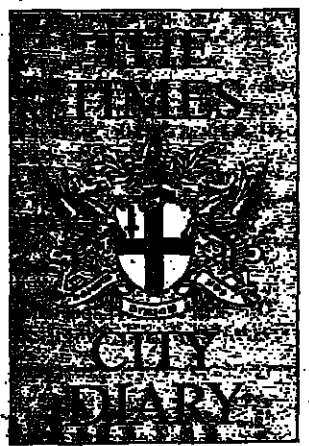
"Not another demerger..."

The reader has bought 200 coins, banked the £1,000 and collected the £20 rebate. This totally legal loophole puts the Tesco clubcard scam — where at one point the rebate on bananas was worth more than the cost of the fruit — in the shade. I can only advise all Alliance & Leicester card holders to pile in immediately.

I AM indebted to the latest Securities and Futures Authority briefing for its collection of "thoughts from the walls". These are little notes that the City regulator's inspectors have noticed pinned up in the offices of firms that they visit. My favourite will be no doubt familiar to anyone who has ever encountered the boss from hell — "I didn't work for him for long but I still wake up screaming."

Card sharp

THE departure of Richard Oster as chairman of Cookson reminds me of a time when I went to visit the garrulous yank at the chemical group's City offices. I was leaning on the reception desk when I noticed a few cards stuck next to a secretary's phone. Among the usual taxi numbers was a card promising "executive services" from a busy 19-year-



old. I wonder what those services were?

Poultry gift

IT IS good to see that the traditional merchant banks still cling to old traditions. Staff at N M Rothschild celebrate what the company calls "the festive season" with a complimentary turkey. There is of course a pecking order which dictates that junior staff take home a lighter bird. Everyone can opt for a small, medium or large turkey, but a small thank you to a top dog outweighs a minion's big bird as befits an organisation that remains conscious of social class, rank and status. All well and good, except that some senior staff have asked for a small turkey, but are having to cart home 22lb plus of poultry.

FRESH from recent victories the coal campaign yesterday threw up a new argument for its continued survival. If there were no coal industry there would be no need for homes to have fireplaces. Bill Flanagan, chairman of the Coalfield Communities Campaign, told a meeting. And then, he asked, where would people hang their Christmas stockings? Expect Santa to sign one of the many petitions to the Government.

Homeless

YOU know the saying: "The cobbler's children always have holes in their shoes." Well, this is particularly apt for Nick Leslau, the property developer who is leaving Burford, the company he created, at the end of the month. Leslau is having to abandon the office his wife — a sculptress — designed for him at Burford and has yet to find a new home for his new property venture, Prestwick Group. Fortunately, the new operation has a staff of only five and will start life squatting in a spare room at the offices of Frank Warwick, the surveyor.

It's Laa-Laa

IAN HISLOP, the folklorically challenged editor of Private Eye, fell prey to the TV pheno-

menon of the year this week. At a charity do for Crisis at Christmas, held by the property industry, Hislop beat rivals from Coopers & Lybrand and BAA to pay £1,000 for a full set of the four. That works out at £250 each for Tinky Winky, Dipsy, Laa-Laa and Po. But this was cheap. Reuters City Screen yesterday auctioned a Tinky Winky to financial dealers, with a certain Mr Mustard from moneybrokers RP Martin paying £500, which went to the Cancer and Leukaemia Childhood Trust. The Teletubbies was actually donated by a firm called Gordon Brown Associates. It can't be the Gordon Brown can it?

JASON NISSÉ



Tinky Winky fetched £500 at an auction

SOMETIMES IT'S EASIER TO TALK TO SOMEONE YOU DON'T LIKE



When you have a problem, it's the most natural thing in the world to want to talk it through with someone. Sometimes, though, this creates another problem: who's the best person to confide in? An obvious choice would be a close friend. But let's face it, we don't always choose our friends for their amazing powers of discretion and discretion. Tell one person, and you may end up telling the world. You may be lucky enough to be able to talk to someone in your family. Then again, you may be one of the large number of people who find talking to your nearest and dearest agonisingly embarrassing. A girlfriend or boyfriend? If you can, great. But sometimes we don't want to expose our weaknesses to those who fancy us. And sometimes your relationship is

the very problem you want to discuss. That's where The Samaritans can be useful. We're more discreet than your best mate, we'll listen as carefully as your girlfriend or boyfriend, and we're as sympathetic as your family. We're also non-judgemental, unshockable, and extremely experienced. Our national number is 0345 950 90 90, and you can e-mail us on john@samaritans.org or visit our homepage at www.samaritans.org. We're available 24 hours a day, every day of the year. And you don't have to be climbing up the walls before you call us — any kind of problem, big or small, is a good enough reason to pick up the phone. Call now. You'll find we're remarkably easy to talk to.

The Samaritans

Rutland Trust sells Thamesport for £112m

By GEORGE SIVELL

RUTLAND TRUST, the mini-conglomerate, yesterday sold Thamesport, the deep-water container terminal on the Isle of Grain, Kent, for £112 million to Hutchison, the Hong Kong ports group.

Hutchison is one of the world's largest container handlers and already owns Felixstowe, Britain's busiest container port. Earlier this year Hutchison said it would spend £100 million over five years to improve Felixstowe.

Of the purchase price up to £8 million will go to the management of Maritime Transport Services Holdings (MTSH), the holding company of Thamesport. It is

believed the lion's share of the £8 million will be shared between three top managers although another 13 benefit. Rutland paid £52 million for MTSH which included Thamesport and its sister company, Maritime Haulage.

The deal remains subject to approval by Rutland shareholders and is conditional on the Office of Fair Trading not referring it to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. Out of the total of £112 million, debts of £23.9 million in MTSH will be repaid to a banking syndicate.

Rutland will receive net cash of approximately £78.7 million, including £32.3 million for repayment of a subordinated loan made to MTSH by Rutland together with accrued interest. Rutland said it will use the cash to take advantage of other opportunities as they arise.

Michael Langdon, Rutland chief executive and deputy chairman, said: "In our view, the Hutchison offer represents a suitable way forward for Thamesport and in two years realises more than double the value of Rutland's original investment. It will leave us with significant cash resources."

He added: "Thamesport is a classic Rutland turnaround. From being in the hands of its bankers in late 1995 it is now a successful and growing container terminal. Thamesport is being upgraded to handle 425,000 containers a year in a quay and container park extension due for completion during the summer of 1998."

Rutland shares rose 7p to 51½p yesterday. It said that overall trading was satisfactory. After the deal it will have net cash of £71.5 million and net assets of around £121 million.

Camargo, the privately owned ferries group, has acquired Scruttons, the shipping and ports company, for £15 million in an effort to expand its service in the Irish Sea.

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Shares in Diageo rise on debut

By CHRIS AYRES

SHARES in Diageo, the company created from the £24 billion merger of Guinness and Grand Metropolitan, rose 2½p on their first day of trading yesterday from 591½p to 594½p.

The merger took seven months to complete, and was finally cleared on Monday by the US Federal Trade Commission. However, the group had to ditch its Dewar's whisky and Bombay gin brands. The FTC said the sale of the global rights to the two brands, worth an estimated £800 million, was the largest it had ever ordered, but that it was necessary to protect US consumers.

Guinness and Grand Met say the merger could save them up to £175 million, although the effect it will have on the combined group's 85,000 employees is unknown.



Lord Harris, right, with John Kitching, managing director, says Carpetright will open 40 stores a year until 2000

Carpetright plans £25m expansion

By CHRIS AYRES

THE market share of Carpetright is expected to nearly double to 30 per cent by 2000, Lord Harris of Peckham, the carpet tycoon and Conservative peer behind the company, said yesterday.

He made the bold statement after revealing that under a £25 million expansion Carpetright, which currently has 303 outlets, would open 40 new stores each year until the millennium.

Lord Harris, chairman and chief executive, inherited his family's carpet business 40 years ago and sold it for £450 million in 1988, starting again with Carpetright.

Carpetright yesterday reported a 16 per cent rise in pre-tax profits from £14 million to £16 million for the six months to October 25, on turnover of £129 million, up 21 per cent from £106 million.

Earnings per share were up 18 pence to 14.3p (12.1p) and a dividend of 9.5p (7.5p) is due on February 28. The company is expected to meet full-year forecasts.

Oftel supports package deals

By RAYMOND SNOODY, MEDIA EDITOR

DON CRICKSHANK, Director-General of Oftel, yesterday backed the cable industry's practice of offering consumers low-cost package deals which include a telephone line and a small number of television channels.

Mr Crickshank told the Independent Television Commission, which is investigating the whole issue of "bundling" of cable channels, that the inexpensive packages were "fair competition and good news for the consumer".

Bundling involves offering a large number of cable channels on a take-it-or-leave-it basis. Yesterday Mr Crickshank said that there should be cause for concern where a supplier with a significant degree of market power made services available only in bundled form.

"BSkyB's practice of supplying premium sports and movie channels to satellite customers only if they also subscribe to its own package of basic programming could

constitute a significant barrier to market entry for other providers of basic channel packages," Mr Crickshank said. News International, the subsidiary of The News Corporation that owns The Times, owns 40 per cent stake of BSkyB.

Mr Crickshank suggested that perhaps dominant operators should make their premium channels available to other providers on "fair, reasonable and non-discriminatory" terms.

This month the issue of which channels should or should not be included in the basic package has spilled into the High Court. On Tuesday Live TV, the Mirror Group's cable channel, famed for innovations such as News Bunny, won a permanent injunction against NTL, the cable group, to keep the channel in its basic package.

Earlier in the month Channel One reached an agreement with Cable & Wireless Communications on similar issues.

Coats gives warning and says 1,100 jobs at risk

By CARL MORTIMER

UP TO 1,100 jobs could be at risk at Coats Viyella, the textile firm that yesterday issued a profit warning and spelt out the details of the demerger of its contract clothing operations and the fashion businesses into a new quoted company, to be called Viyella.

Coats Viyella said trading in the second half had been disappointing with the strength of sterling and the downturn in South-East Asia affecting its clothing and thread businesses.

The company expects operating profit to fall £40 million short of the £174 million achieved last year. Michael Ost, chief executive of Coats said: "The demerger of Viyella will not solve the operational problems of the business."

The demerger Viyella will include the UK and European textile businesses as well as the Jaeger and Viyella retail chains, a group comprising more than £900 million in sales. It will include the Marks & Spencer contract clothing business, but it will shed Counterpart, the division that supplies retailers other than Marks & Spencer which is expected to lose £8 million this year.

The thread and precision engineering businesses, with sales of £1.5 billion, will make up the new Coats group. The company would not comment yesterday on the dividend likely to be paid out by the demerged companies.

Counterpart employs about 1,100 people, with factories in the Midlands and Scotland and sourcing operations in London. The company hopes to sell the Counterpart businesses, but if buyers are not found at a satisfactory price, the operations will be shut at a cost of some £15 million.

Sir David Alliance, chairman of Coats Viyella, said every attempt would be made to find buyers for the assets and he did not expect all the staff to be made redundant.

The demerger of Coats Viyella breaks apart the textile empire built up by Sir David over the past decade. Sir David said yesterday that the company had suffered from having as much as 70 per cent of its garment manufacturing business based in the UK while rivals had reduced their UK exposure to 50 per cent.

The demerger is expected to be completed mid 1998.

BA denies US court setback with Laker

BRITISH AIRWAYS has denied suffering a reversal in its legal fight with Sir Freddie Laker, the cut-price travel pioneer, over landing slots for Laker Airlines at Gatwick. Laker Airlines, based in Florida, said an American court had overturned a ruling in favour of British Airways, allowing Laker Airlines to proceed with its claim that British Airways had used its dominant position to prevent it obtaining desirable slots at Gatwick. This is understood to be incorrect.

Laker has filed a motion to alter the judgment, effectively inviting the US district court judge to reconsider his motion to dismiss. Our report suggesting otherwise was based on incorrect agency copy. Laker launched its action against British Airways in the US District Court in Fort Lauderdale in June, saying that slots for its London-Miami service are too late to allow passengers to make connecting flights to Central and South America and the Caribbean.

National Express deal

NATIONAL EXPRESS has bought Group Bronckaers, a privately owned bus operator in Belgium, for £4.25 million in cash. It said £3 million will be paid on completion with a further £1.25 million during the next two years, subject to further £1.25 million achieving future operating profit targets of £600,000 in each of the two years. Based at Genk near the Dutch and German borders, Bronckaers operates 104 vehicles and has 100 staff. In the year to June 30 it reported a turnover of £4.3 million, and operating profit of £450,000.

Tunstall in MBO talks

TUNSTALL GROUP, the provider of emergency communications for the elderly, said its executive management was in talks with potential providers of finance to proceed with a management buyout of the company. The buyout proposals were first revealed in September. Independent directors are being advised by Close Brothers. Yesterday Tunstall reported a fall in pre-tax profits to £4.14 million (£8.19 million) in the year to September 30. Earnings were 1.1p (17.7p) a share. The final dividend is held at 3.32p, making a total of 5.17p p.p.

BAT unit disposal

SOUZA CRUZ, BAT Industries' 75 per cent-owned Brazilian unit, said it has agreed to sell its wholly owned subsidiary, Companhia Industrial de Papel Pirahy, to Schweizer-Mauduit International for \$62 million (£37 million). It said the transaction will not produce any effect which may substantially affect the net worth, the results and the operations of Souza Cruz. Pirahy is the only national producer of cigarette paper. Schweizer-Mauduit has operations in America, France and Canada.

Saga writes down stake

SAGA PETROLEUM will write down the book value of its 23.5 per cent stake in the Dunward and Dauntless North Sea oilfield by between \$50 million (£30 million) and \$60 million. The field operator, Amerada Hess, has advised Saga and the other owners that reserves in the field and the rate of production are lower than originally estimated. The book value of the field at August 31 was \$73.3 million. Saga said further evaluations of the field will be necessary before the company can specify the exact amount of the writedown.

Prestbury acquires lease

PRESTBURY has exchanged contracts to acquire the long leasehold interest in Intec business park, Basingstoke, from Royal Life for £13.25 million. Prestbury said the multi-let property, built in 1985, comprises 223,000 sq ft of principally air-conditioned high-tech space in five buildings on a secured estate of some 13 acres. Around 90,000 sq ft is currently vacant, the company said. The leasehold is held from the local council on a 250-year lease. Prestbury said the acquisition is being funded from cash resources and bank finance will be sought shortly.

OMG backs research

AN INVESTMENT of £5 million cash is to be made by Oxford Molecular Group (OMG) in Cambridge Drug Discovery, a new service company that will specialise in providing advanced high-throughput screening services for customers, ranging from large pharmaceutical groups to small biotech companies. The automated process allows large numbers of chemical compounds to be rapidly tested for potential therapeutic activity in the discovery of new drugs. OMG will provide a full drug design and screening service.

Stagecoach Lisbon bid

STAGECOACH HOLDINGS, the UK transport group, has jointly submitted a tender to operate the North-South rail link in Lisbon in partnership with Mota, a Portuguese construction company. The proposal is being considered by the Portuguese privatisation commission. The link is intended to relieve congestion and reduce travelling time for thousands of passengers. The winning bidder is likely to be chosen in the summer of 1998 and to begin operations in the first quarter of 1999.

Bowthorpe acquisition

BOWTHORPE, the electronics group, is acquiring Western Pacific Data Systems (WPDS), a US software company, for up to £38.1 million. WPDS supplies an integrated software package called Gold, which manages logistics, maintenance, supply and inventory adopted by several major companies. In the ten months to October 31 WPDS earned pre-tax profits of \$3.2 million. Full-year profits are expected to be \$6 million. Bowthorpe has also agreed to buy WPDS's UK subsidiary, based in Somerset, for £600,000.

Eurotherm blames cut in profits on strong pound

By MARTIN BARROW

THE strong pound battered Eurotherm, the controls and instrumentation company, where pre-tax profits fell almost 20 per cent to £30.3 million in the year to October 31.

Sir James Hann, chairman, announcing year-end figures, said yesterday that the strength of sterling against leading currencies was a serious threat to business.

He said: "The cumulative effect of the continued strength of sterling taken across thousands of exporting companies in Britain could, in my view, do unnecessary damage to the economy, to the UK's growth prospects and to our manufacturing base unless we return

to more acceptable exchange rate levels in the months to come."

Eurotherm's reported earnings fell to 22.7p a share from 27.6p. To illustrate the impact of sterling, the company also restated earnings at constant exchange rates to show that growth would have been above 10 per cent.

Turnover of £202.3 million was down from £206.5 million last year, but would have been £13.1 million higher at constant exchange rates.

Sir James said the stronger second half reflected actions that were taken to mitigate the exchange rate impact. Markets in Britain and America

account for just over half of sales and showed great resilience last year, he said.

"Although trading conditions have been tough and margin pressure severe there are strong indications of an underlying improvement in the rate of growth of orders received."

The total dividend is increased to 10p a share from 9p, with a final 5.8p.

Eurotherm shares rose 8½p to 363p yesterday. In January the shares traded at 543p. Last year they peaked at 644p before a boardroom battle that resulted in the departure of Jack Leonard and his replacement by Sir James.

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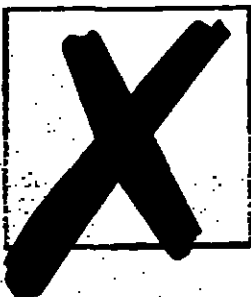
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TRADING PERIOD: Settlement takes place five business days after the day of trade. Changes are calculated on the previous day's close, but adjustments are made when a stock is ex-dividend. Changes, yields and price/earnings ratios are based on middle prices.

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| 1997 | Low Company | Price | % | % | 1997 | Low Company | Price | % | % |
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| 705 | 5200 South Inc | 685 | 0 | 43.112 | 1755 | 85 Palumbo | 85 | 0 | 57.187 |
| 706 | 5200 South Inc | 685 | 0 | 43.112 | 1756 | 85 Palumbo | 85 | 0 | 57.187 |
| 707 | 5200 South Inc | 685 | 0 | 43.112 | 1757 | 85 Palumbo | 85 | 0 | 57.187 |
| 708 | 5200 South Inc | 685 | 0 | 43.112 | 1758 | 85 Palumbo | 85 | 0 | 57.187 |
| 709 | 5200 South Inc | 685 | 0 | 43.112 | 1759 | 85 Palumbo | 85 | 0 | 57.187 |
| 710 | 5200 South Inc | 685 | 0 | 43.112 | 1760 | 85 Palumbo | 85 | 0 | 57.187 |
| 711 | 5200 South Inc | 685 | 0 | 43.112 | 1761 | 85 Palumbo | 85 | 0 | 57.187 |
| 712 | 5200 South Inc | 685 | 0 | 43.112 | 1762 | 85 Palumbo | 85 | 0 | 57.187 |
| 713 | 5200 South Inc | 685 | 0 | 43.112 | 1763 | 85 Palumbo | 85 | 0 | 57.187 |
| 714 | 5200 South Inc | 685 | 0 | 43.112 | 1764 | 85 Palumbo | 85 | 0 | 57.187 |
| 715 | 5200 South Inc | 685 | 0 | 43.112 | 1765 | 85 Palumbo | 85 | 0 | 57.187 |
| 716 | 5200 South Inc | 685 | 0 | 43.112 | 1766 | 85 Palumbo | 85 | 0 | 57.187 |
| 717 | 5200 South Inc | 685 | 0 | 43.112 | 1767 | 85 Palumbo | 85 | 0 | 57.187 |
| 718 | 5200 South Inc | 685 | 0 | 43.112 | 1768 | 85 Palumbo | 85 | 0 | 57.187 |
| 719 | 5200 South Inc | 685 | 0 | 43.112 | 1769 | 85 Palumbo | 85 | 0 | 57.187 |
| 720 | 5200 South Inc | 685 | 0 | 43.112 | 1770 | 85 Palumbo | 85 | 0 | 57.187 |
| 721 | 5200 South Inc | 685 | 0 | 43.112 | 1771 | 85 Palumbo | 85 | 0 | 57.187 |
| 722 | 5200 South Inc | 685 | 0 | 43.112 | 1772 | 85 Palumbo | 85 | 0 | 57.187 |
| 723 | 5200 South Inc | 685 | 0 | 43.112 | 1773 | 85 Palumbo | 85 | 0 | 57.187 |
| 724 | 5200 South Inc | 685 | 0 | 43.112 | 1774 | 85 Palumbo | 85 | 0 | 57.187 |
| 725 | 5200 South Inc | 685 | 0 | 43.112 | 1775 | 85 Palumbo | 85 | 0 | 57.187 |
| 726 | 5200 South Inc | 685 | 0 | 43.112 | 1776 | 85 Palumbo | 85 | 0 | 57.187 |
| 727 | 5200 South Inc | 685 | 0 | 43.112 | 1777 | 85 Palumbo | 85 | 0 | 57.187 |
| 728 | 5200 South Inc | 685 | 0 | 43.112 | 1778 | 85 Palumbo | 85 | 0 | 57.187 |
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| 730 | 5200 South Inc | 685 | 0 | 43.112 | 1780 | 85 Palumbo | 85 | 0 | 57.187 |
| 731 | 5200 South Inc | 685 | 0 | 43.112 | 1781 | 85 Palumbo | 85 | 0 | 57.187 |
| 732 | 5200 South Inc | 685 | 0 | 43.112 | 1782 | 85 Palumbo | 85 | 0 | 57.187 |
| 733 | 5200 South Inc | 685 | 0 | 43.112 | 1783 | 85 Palumbo | 85 | 0 | 57.187 |
| 734 | 5200 South Inc | 685 | 0 | 43.112 | 1784 | 85 Palumbo | 85 | 0 | 57.187 |
| 735 | 5200 South Inc | 685 | 0 | 43.112 | 1785 | 85 Palumbo | 85 | 0 | 57.187 |
| 736 | 5200 South Inc | 685 | 0 | 43.112 | 1786 | 85 Palumbo | 85 | 0 | 57.187 |
| 737 | 5200 South Inc | 685 | 0 | 43.112 | 1787 | 85 Palumbo | 85 | 0 | 57.187 |
| 738 | 5200 South Inc | 685 | 0 | 43.112 | 1788 | 85 Palumbo | 85 | 0 | 57.187 |
| 739 | 5200 South Inc | 685 | 0 | 43.112 | 1789 | 85 Palumbo | 85 | 0 | 57.187 |
| 740 | 5200 South Inc | 685 | 0 | 43.112 | 1790 | 85 Palumbo | 85 | 0 | 57.187 |
| 741 | 5200 South Inc | 685 | 0 | 43.112 | 1791 | 85 Palumbo | 85 | 0 | 57.187 |
| 742 | 5200 South Inc | 685 | 0 | 43.112 | 1792 | 85 Palumbo | 85 | 0 | 57.187 |
| 743 | 5200 South Inc | 685 | 0 | 43.112 | 1793 | 85 Palumbo | 85 | 0 | 57.187 |
| 744 | 5200 South Inc | 685 | 0 | 43.112 | 1794 | 85 Palumbo | 85 | 0 | 57.187 |
| 745 | 5200 South Inc | 685 | 0 | 43.112 | 1795 | 85 Palumbo | 85 | 0 | 57.187 |
| 746 | 5200 South Inc | 685 | 0 | 43.112 | 1796 | 85 Palumbo | 85 | 0 | 57.187 |
| 747 | 5200 South Inc | 685 | 0 | 43.112 | 1797 | 85 Palumbo | 85 | 0 | 57.187 |
| 748 | 5200 South Inc | 685 | 0 | 43.112 | 1798 | 85 Palumbo | 85 | 0 | 57.187 |
| 749 | 5200 South Inc | 685 | 0 | 43.112 | 1799 | 85 Palumbo | 85 | 0 | 57.187 |
| 750 | 5200 South Inc | 685 | 0 | 43.112 | 1800 | 85 Palumbo | 85 | 0 | 57.187 |
| 751 | 5200 South Inc | 685 | 0 | 43.112 | 1801 | 85 Palumbo | 85 | 0 | 57.187 |
| 752 | 5200 South Inc | 685 | 0 | 43.112 | 1802 | 85 Palumbo | 85 | 0 | 57.187 |
| 753 | 5200 South Inc | 685 | 0 | 43.112 | 1803 | 85 Palumbo | 85 | 0 | 57.187 |
| 754 | 5200 South Inc | 685 | 0 | 43.112 | 1804 | 85 Palumbo | 85 | 0 | 57.187 |
| 755 | 5200 South Inc | 685 | 0 | 43.112 | 1805 | 85 Palumbo | 85 | 0 | 57.187 |
| 756 | 5200 South Inc | 685 | 0 | 43.112 | 1806 | 85 Palumbo | 85 | 0 | 57.187 |
| 757 | 5200 South Inc | 685 | 0 | 43.112 | 1807 | 85 Palumbo | 85 | 0 | 57.187 |
| 758 | 5200 South Inc | 685 | 0 | 43.112 | 1808 | 85 Palumbo | 85 | 0 | 57.187 |
| 759 | 5200 South Inc | 685 | 0 | 43.112 | 1809 | 85 Palumbo | 85 | 0 | 57.187 |
| 760 | 5200 South Inc | 685 | 0 | 43.112 | 1810 | 85 Palumbo | 85 | 0 | 57.18 |

A chance
distance fo



مكتبة من الأهل

ACCOUNTANCY

Don't just measure the past

Neil Chisman explains the reasons why senior management should be held to account for their performance

Accountants have lost sight of their purpose in life. We are supposed to hold managements accountable for their performance, which we do very well for middle and junior levels of management, where performance is measured by profit. But we fail with boards of directors because they are not responsible for profit, but the creation of value.

Profit is important since it is a key driver of value, but other senior management activities are equally so — setting and disseminating strategy, managing risk, buying and selling businesses and much more. Senior management decisions create or destroy much more value than the execution of those decisions at middle and junior levels.

Accountants do not measure this performance, although it is entirely possible. If the balance sheet records net assets at current values — what management believes they should be worth — it represents a snapshot in time of the value created since inception. Gains and losses are only the difference in net asset value at the beginning and end of a period adjusted for any cashflows to or from shareholders. And if the balance sheet is in current values then

those gains and losses represent the value created or destroyed in a period.

Accountants and managements complain that current values cannot be ascertained with any accuracy. It is the role of the stock market to value, not accountants. Toshi: managements have no difficulty in valuing businesses when considering mergers and acquisitions. They can forecast cashflows many years into the future under considerable uncertainty, they can identify their weighted average cost of capital, they can perform discounted cashflow analyses.

It is easy to value businesses because they have revenue streams. It is not necessary to measure the values of individual assets, they are only the component parts of businesses. The impairment tests proposed by the ASB in recent FREDs show what is required.

Current value accounting would hold senior management accountable for their overall performance. Managements would be required to show, on their own estimates, the value that they have created or destroyed. And the focus of attention of analysts and other observers would be upon the totality of value-creating activity, not just the arguable



Neil Chisman is a supporter of current value accounting

part, which we currently call profit. This would be a major step forward, but not enough. Analysts and shareholders need to take their own view on the value of a company to provide discipline on management. They need to judge independently the company's prospects, the quality and repeatability of profit and cashflows and the quality of management. There is a simple solution. Make a forecast. Add an extra column of figures in the financial schedules showing managements' estimates of the outcome for the next financial year. Outrageous? Certainly new, but hardly difficult. We all have a budget. The information is available. Why not publish it? Apply normal budgetary control to senior management. Managements would have a

strong incentive to make the forecast neither too prudent nor too optimistic. Is it better to be sacked for under-achievement of your forecast, or to be taken over for under-forecasting the potential? They would disclose a wealth of information useful in evaluating a company's share because they would be keen to share the uncertainties. Analysts would probe managements' projections and question the assumptions, a much more useful role than merely trying to elicit a forecast from management.

There is the potential for a major improvement in the performance of UK plc by adopting this much more informative approach to reporting. The present set-up is practically designed to protect management from being accountable. The corporate disasters that hit the headlines are merely the tip of an iceberg of suboptimal senior management performance.

It is we accountants that have allowed this situation to arise. We have let senior management off the hook. We fail to measure their performance. We still try to use historic cost profit, so we deserve our reputation for knowing the cost of everything and the value of nothing. If we focus on value and what drives it, then the whole concept will become much better understood and managements will concentrate on creating more of it.

The author is finance director of Stakis and a member of the Financial Reporting Council

When regulation leads to regret

REGULATION is a wonderful thing. Some people seem to love to see other people regulated. It is only when the spotlight describes an are and turns its regulatory glare on them that they start to come up with reasons why they themselves should be excluded. Successive governments have complained about creative accounting. They have thrown up their arms in mock horror on hearing of such crafty schemes as, for example, off-balance sheet financing.

Ministers talk to accountants and express amazement that anyone could allow a company to tuck a large pile of assets away in such way that shareholders are oblivious of their existence and the company's balance sheet looks strikingly healthy as a result. So pressure is brought to bear and an independent watchdog is set up. And, when it has got itself sorted out, it sets to and introduces rules which ban off-balance sheet financing. Companies produce more accurate figures, fewer of them go bust in embarrassing circumstances, and ministers are much happier as they are no longer being asked to sort out accounting scandals.

Then governments realise, years after everyone else, what a brilliant scam off-balance sheet accounting is. They invent the Private Finance Initiative (PFI). They are in wonderland. Instead of having to fund huge projects like hospitals, bridges, prisons or roads they get a private sector outfit to do that and simply pay to receive the service that the projects provide. All the borrowing for such projects vanishes from the Government's accounts. The PSBR suddenly seems more manageable in tough times. But later on, or last week to be precise, up pops that independent regulator. If it was off-balance sheet financing and audacity and wrong for companies to do it, then how does it make it different when it is the Treasury which is up to the tricks. We now await the answer.

Last week's innocent little booklet from the Accounting Standards Board entitled *Amendment to FRSS Reporting the Substance of Transaction: The Private Finance Initiative* is a wonderful thing. It doesn't spell it out in so many words. But the message is that if the rules are right for corporate sector transactions then they should be right for public sector transactions, particularly where the public sector has borrowed the corporate sector's clothes.

In its essence the Government's argument is simple. "The prison," it will say, "is nothing to do with us, gov. All we do is pay for the

provision of the service. It is just a service. We don't actually own the prison." To which the sensible answer is: "Pull the other one. Who else would want a prison?" There are accounting niceties, mostly to do with the impenetrable rules on leasing, but that in essence is all that is being argued about. The Government has dug itself in deeper, having realised that everything needs to be dressed up even more. So value for money is cited at all times and the pressure grows to pile more and more services, like car parking or catering, into the deals as window-dressing.

The most recent Treasury paper, *Partnerships For Prosperity*, published last month, had this to say: "Where the accounting analysis requires a PFI transaction to be treated in substance as borrowing, the procurer will almost certainly want to look at the deal again. The public body should examine the scope for reworking the deal so that it is clearly for the provision of services." Game, set and match to the ASB. The document continues: "Expanding the scope of the project can be a means of achieving greater risk transfer on good value for money terms."

Which sounds just like all the corporate protestations over off-balance sheet financing rules. The document concludes that "as far as the PFI is concerned, it is important to remember that accounting treatment should not be a determinant of whether a project should go ahead; the test is value for money". Or as Sandra Thompson, the ASB's project director on the PFI would put it: "The concern is that people might add more and more risky services to the projects to justify taking it off-balance sheet." Governments are always caught like this. They cannot stomach criticism, so they set up independent regulators to distance themselves from future scandals. But this should not deter regulators.

Despite what the largest accounting firms may wish to say about the future of regulation in an attempt to ingratiate themselves with the Brussels authorities, the plans to set up a review board for the profession are still on course. By early next year the Government will have a complete package from the profession. And that would enable it to achieve its manifesto pledge on regulating the profession by the end of April. The only danger remaining is that the review board may want to then ask a few searching questions in the years to come. The large accounting firms, like the Treasury, may come to regret their views on the validity of regulation.



ROBERT BRUCE

Not too taxing a calculation

THE problem of duplicate tax returns and the confusion this has brought to the world of self-assessment continues to amaze tax advisers. Three Counties Accountancy, a firm in Kendal, had a client who received two tax returns. Mindful of the chaos that duplicate returns have caused they contacted the Inland Revenue to ask which one should be treated as the duplicate. They then sent it back. Four days later they received a note

from the Revenue enclosing a calculation for the tax liability "which I have been able to process without any need for correction". Not surprisingly this turned out to be "full on full income". No wonder the statistics from Somerset House show such a healthy clear-up rate.

Name dropping

DOWN at Price Waterhouse they are understandably jubi-

lant that partners around the world "resoundingly" voted for the merger with Coopers & Lybrand. Now, while regulatory authorities toil, the firms are searching for a new name that will sum up their fresh start to a new future. But there are signs that this bright new strategy also involves jettisoning much of their past history and culture.

A note in the Christmas issue of PW's in-house magazine extols the virtues of *True*

and *Fair*, the history of the firm that it had published two years ago. It quotes *The Times* as describing it as "a rattling good read". And then they point out that, if any member of staff wants a copy, they can have one free.

Ernst in earnest

ERNST & YOUNG famously never beats about the bush when it thinks Chancellors of the Exchequer have not got a

due. So it is good to read its robust report on the aftermath of the "Green Budget". "We have yet to encounter a Chancellor who did not have the elimination of tax avoidance as a target," it says. "It is simply that some are noisier about it than others." It accuses ministers of "profound confusion" and of having become entangled in "moral fury". The Government must be hoping the firm has not decided to have a go at the morality of the Private Finance Initiative as well.

ROBERT BRUCE

AN EXCLUSIVE COMPETITION

THE TIMES

A chance to go the distance for Diana

Wanted: 20 people to run the marathon as fundraisers for the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund



The Times has secured 20 places for its readers to take part in the 1998 Flora London Marathon and help raise more than the target of £5 million for the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund.

The Times 20 will be part of Team Flora, in which all the runners will be fundraising for the Memorial Fund, one of the two official charities for the race next year. A special panel has been set up to select readers wanting to 'Run for Diana' over the historic distance through the streets of London on Sunday, April 26.

The Times will also publish the complete results of the race — from the international heroes and heroines at the front to the determined joggers at the back.

There has already been unprecedented interest in the 1998 event. A record 100,000 people applied to enter, including 20,000 who specifically responded to an



invitation to run for the Memorial Fund.

This year, it was televised in more than 100 countries and 600,000 people lined the London streets to cheer on the 29,135 competitors, who ran from Greenwich to the Mall, triumphantly finishing the course of 26 miles 385 yards.

The fund-raising for the

Memorial Fund will be poignant for many of the competitors next year because they will be running on the streets where the coffin of the Princess was carried at her funeral on September 6. It will also be 10 years since she was the official starter of the 1988 event.

Applications should not

come from people who have already been informed that they have been selected to take part in the 1998 race.

The names of the chosen 20 will be published in *The Times* on Monday, January 19 and the newspaper will then highlight some of the runners' stories and preparation in the build-up to the event itself.

THE TIMES DIANA TEAM COMPETITION ENTRY FORM

Read the form below carefully: the judges will base their decision on what you reveal in this form. All the winners who take part in the marathon on April 26 will be asked to sign a pledge form relating to their commitment to raise funds for the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund and to remit such funds by May 31, 1998. Our

entry forms for the chance to win a place in the Diana Team should reach the following address by January 9, 1998: *The Times Diana Team, Flora London Marathon, PO Box 5071, Leighton Buzzard, LU7 7FY*. Judging will take place on January 14 and the winners will be informed by telephone by January 19.

Title _____ Initials _____
Surname _____
Address _____
Day tel _____
Eve tel _____
Age _____ Female ☐ Male ☐
Occupation _____
Which category do you wish to enter?
Men ☐ Women ☐
Do you suffer from any illness/es? _____

Have you been in hospital for an operation?
If yes, state what and when _____

Have you, a relative or friend, ever met Princess Diana? If yes, describe the occasion _____

Have you, a relative or friend, any connection with any of the Diana, Princess of Wales, charities, or a special reason for wanting to be in the Diana team? Describe your connection _____

Have you ever competed in a marathon before? _____

How much money did you raise? _____

For which organisation/s? _____

Have you raised funds for any organisation/s before? _____

Describe how much you raised and how you did it _____

Do you have any outstanding achievements of which you are proud? Tell us about them _____

What are your hobbies? _____

State, in not more than 50 words, why you deserve a place in this year's marathon _____

Please send the completed entry form to:
The Times Diana Team, Flora London Marathon, PO Box 5071, Leighton Buzzard, LU7 7FY

NEW MOVIES: Kids may love it, but Geoff Brown has had enough of the formatted excesses of *Home Alone 3*

Ma's out, Pa's out, let's talk crude

Another Christmas season, another kid home alone. Let us rejoice that he is not Macaulay Culkin, the increasingly obnoxious star of the first *Home Alone* films, currently enjoying the inevitable eclipse that adolescence brings. Not that Alex D. Linz in *Home Alone 3* deserves any great fanfare. This eight-year-old tyke has that slick, artificial manner born of acting cute in some two dozen TV commercials (he also appeared in *One Fine Day*, as Michelle Pfeiffer's son), Shaggy auburn hair, husky voice. But penetrate the outer shell, and you might find electronic circuitry.

Linz's character, conveniently also called Alex, is certainly not programmed to show fear. Left in his ample house in Chicago's suburbs, ill with chickenpox while his parents lead their busy lives, he greets the inevitable intruders with a few choice insults and a colossal array of booby-trap devices. Marbles lie under the welcome mat. A trunkful of books crashes down from the roof. Floorboards are loosened, buckets of glop carefully placed, Heath Robinson contraptions primed. This boy follows the Scout motto, "Be Prepared."

Audiences are prepared, too, for a *Home Alone* movie leaves little room for filmmakers to manoeuvre. The director, Raja Gosnell, served as editor on the previous two films, so he knows the ropes only too well. The writer and producer, John Hughes, always a man fond of a formula, allows a few changes. In *Home Alone* and *Home Alone 2*, the house intruders were bungling burglars. The present crew are gun-carrying professionals, hired by North Korean terrorists to retrieve a computer chip, crammed with American defence plans, which found its way through a large quirk of fate into little Alex's toy car.

Initially, they behave like any hard villains. By the end, they have become Alex's playthings, composure shattered by electric shocks, encasement in ice and a hundred other torments. If you wish to send get well cards, the actors' names are Rya Kihlstedt, David Thornton and Lenny von Dohlen.

Children always take pleasure in seeing adults ritually humiliated. For them, fun of a sort — cruel, repetitive — can be guaranteed. Older viewers must content themselves with wincing at the violence, twiddling their thumbs, and noting how the script soft-pedals parental guilt by mentioning how absent adults can still keep in touch through mobile phones, faxes, or the Internet. More jaundiced souls can even take some comfort in the sheer rigidity of the *Home*



Check out that tousled coiffure and eyes gleaming with innocent fun. Wonder what he's doing with the wire cutters. This is Alex D. Linz of *Home Alone 3*, and he has cuteness to die for

Alone formula, for if they keep making sequels as unoriginal as this, some day nobody will be at home at all.

Hollywood has no monopoly on family fun. Europeans can ladle it out too, not with the same precision, perhaps, but with high spirits and a lack of pretence. Look at *Prince Valiant*, a German-British co-production shot in Snowdonia and Berlin.

Set in Arthurian times, it cares even less about authenticity than its source material. Harold R. Foster's venerable comic-strip (source, too, of Hollywood's 1954 movie). The Viking marauders who threaten our land resemble medieval bikers. The princess in peril, played by Katherine Heigl, is a blonde babe whisked from

some Californian beach. Stephen Moyer's lightly likeable Valiant is, in the producer's words, "Generation X medieval-style", fired up to fight for truth and justice, but gormless about practicalities. Joanna Lumley brings her own modern overtones to Morgan Le Fey, simmering among her cauldrons, dressed in black leather and chain-mail. The talk, too, is resolutely late 20th century.

The director Anthony Hickox, usually associated with video bin ventures such as *Hellraiser III: Hell on Earth*, attacks the material with untrammelled glee, jostling his camera in the action scenes, highlighting the comic-strip tone by venturing briefly into animation to bridge dif-

ferent parts of the story. Loud music is poured like a sauce over everything. Finesses is nowhere. And, once you give up looking for it, the film becomes quite enjoyable.

George of the Jungle is acceptable, too, although appreciation may be increased if you know of its origins in a late 1960s television cartoon series created by Jay Ward, master of crude animation and satirical humour. Like Tarzan, George is jungle-bred. Unlike Tarzan, he is physically inept, hitting trees as he swings through the vines.

Lots of *Home Alone* violence, then? Not a bit. As the stentorian narrator informs us: "No one dies in this movie, they just get really big boos." Aside from the playful

stunts, the live-action characters are also kept busy following a routine story. George (Brendan Fraser, mobile face, large and friendly) rescues Ursula (Leslie Mann, winsome, thin), a ditty heiress on an African safari with her unfeeling fiancé. George loves Ursula. Vice versa, Ursula takes him back to San Francisco, where he ruffles socialite feathers and swings round the Golden Gate Bridge.

But the jungle calls, along with its menagerie of creatures. Here technical complications enter. One minute we see trained live animals; the next, George's elephant friend Shep is eerily computer-enhanced to frolic and pounce like a dog. We meet the handiwork of Jim Henson's

Creature Shop, as in Ape, the educated gorilla, given the lordly, exasperated voice of John Cleese. Still, the multimedia animal kingdom is kept reasonably controlled by the director Sam Weisman. George of the Jungle is a passable family fun.

So where is the adult fun this week? In *Close-Up*, the latest Iranian film to reach British shores, although the journey has taken eight years. Abbas Kiarostami is the director, and any admirer of his recent work, *And Life Goes On* or *Through the Olive Trees*, should need no prodding to see this typically compassionate and brain-teasing piece. As in so much recent Iranian cinema, the film explores the mechanics and mys-

teries of cinema itself, using the real-life case of the unemployed Hossain Sabzian, who tells a woman met on a bus that he is the Iranian filmmaker Mohsen Makhmalbaf. Meeting her family, he suggests using their home, and their services as actors, in his forthcoming movie. Suspensions are roused, and arrest for fraud follows. Then comes the trial.

But wait. All is not so simple. For this film about a fake director is itself something of a fake, using the case's real participants but presenting simulated scenes as direct reportage. Only the trial itself, shot on video, appears the genuine article.

Always playfully philosophical, Kiarostami invites us to

Home Alone 3

Warner West End
PG, 103 mins
Remember the law of diminishing returns?

Prince Valiant
Warner West End
PG, 95 mins
Enjoyable Arthurian nonsense

George of the Jungle
Warner West End
U, 93 mins
Live-action debut of a cartoon hero

Close-Up
ICA Cinema, 93 mins
Humane wonder from Iran's Abbas Kiarostami

Kiss Me, Guido
Metro, 15, 89 mins
Gay comedy too eager to please the crowds

share his enjoyment in testing cinema's boundaries. But he never loses sight of his characters as people. Sabzian's defence is that he wanted, for a moment, to enjoy respect and escape his impoverished life. Kiarostami encourages us to sympathise, and find goodness in all parties to the dispute.

He also, as always, persuades us to watch the simplest things in new ways. For several entrancing seconds we follow a canister rolling down the road, to be buffeted by fate and kicked on its way a few minutes later. A driver gathers discarded flowers from a rubbish heap to decorate his taxi: an incidental detail that becomes imbued with lyric significance. Kiarostami makes us keep our eyes, hearts and minds open: that is why he is one of the world's most important and necessary film-makers.

But will anyone pay attention to his film in the week before Christmas? The question, I fear, may be answered in Nanni Moretti's droll supporting short, where he monitors the first day's box-office takings of *Close-Up* in Rome. Two screenings net 57 admissions. All around Italy, however, *The Lion King* rakes in the lire.

Kiss Me, Guido goes all out to please with breezy comedy about a gay New York artist in need of a room-mate. Enter an Italian pizza parlour employee, ee, straight and impossible. Tony Vitale's first feature offers buoyant disc sounds, amusing digs at avant-garde theatre, and a likeable cast (Nick Scotti, Anthony Barre, Anthony DeSando). But the weight of stereotypes and true plotting eventually drag the film down.

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SNAP VERDICT

'Ban this movie'

Every week, young film fans discuss the latest releases...

□ **HOME ALONE 3**
Leslie Isiah Thomas, 19: So violent that I can't recommend this movie to adults, let alone children.

Dom Young, 19: If you want your home left standing, do not let your kids see this. Jeffery Aukin, 19: Similar to *Godfather Part III*, in that it's not as good as Parts I and II. Sharada Osman, 19: Like a children's version of *Pulp Fiction*. Ban this movie.

□ **PRINCE VALIANT**
Leslie: This film has little going for it other than Stephen Moyer, who is going to be a great big superstar. Dom: The original comics were inspired, this film much less so. Jeffery: Began well but very quickly went downhill. Sharada: I couldn't keep my eyes off Moyer. Step aside, Tom Cruise.

□ **KISS ME GUIDO**
Leslie: It has its comic moments. There are just too few of them.

Dom: The actors and director do very well considering the script. The scriptwriter had obviously forgotten he was writing a comedy.

Jeffery: A very substantial film. I remember when comedy meant laughs. Sharada: Pleasant enough — I have seen worse films.

Why did they keep mum about this?

■ MOTHER

CIC, PG, 1996
THIS delightful comedy by Albert Brooks, unaccountably passed over for theatrical release, follows the fortunes of a science-fiction writer at the crossroads who decides the best way to solve his problems might be to return to his mum, and live in his old room at home. Bickering and carping follow, not least over the contents of the fridge. Brooks himself fills the neurotic hero's shoes with ease. The film is made, though, by Debbie Reynolds, getting her first major role in 25 years as the mother used to her own eccentricities, and now faced by someone else's. A rental release.

■ A BING CROSBY CHRISTMAS

VCI, E, 1979
FIFTY minutes of rapid clips from 15 years of musical Christmas cheer, dispensed on television by Bing Crosby, surrounded by beaming family members, and showbiz colleagues young and old, from Fred Astaire to David Bowie.

■ ANNA KARENINA

Warner, 12, 1997
ST PETERSBURG gleams in the sunlight. Ballrooms shimmer with gilt. But where are

NEW ON VIDEO

the compelling emotions and the believable characters? Not here, except for James Fox's Karenin, who starts frostily but then thaws nicely as his wife's affair unravels. As Anna, Sophie Marceau does little to hide her French nationality, while Sean Bean eliminates charisma from Vronsky, the Count who captures her heart. A stodgy Euro-pudding from director Bernard Rose: read the book instead. A rental release.

■ IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE

PolyGram, U, 1946
FRANK CAPRA'S hymn to homely American values is no stranger to video, although this release benefits from restored image and sound and a 23-minute item about the making of the film. There are cornball touches, certainly, but the story of James Stew-

art's doubting do-gooder in a small, cosy town has its interesting dark side, and it would take the most determined Scrooge not to be moved by the final moments, when Stewart pulls back from the brink.

■ SELENA

Warner, PG, 1997
TEX-MEX singer Selena, shot dead two years ago by her fan club leader at the age of 23, receives the worshipful biopic treatment in this entertaining movie. The fatal incident itself is not even shown; instead we focus on Selena's family background and rapid rise to glory. What saves the film from being anodyne, apart from the music, is the performance of Jennifer Lopez, whose smile radiates enough sunshine and stranger to see us all through winter. The director is Gregory Nava, best known for independent movies such as *El Norte*. A rental release.

GEOFF BROWN

Passion with panache

JAZZ

Rick Margitza
Pizza Express, W1

original, *August in Paris*. Where the average saxophonist frequently hurls into the set's introductory number like a sprinter off the blocks, Margitza paced himself, gradually transforming the kind of passionately rhapsodic rhetoric he required for later originals such as *Gypsy*, a bustling theme celebrating his Romanian heritage. Margitza spent five years studying in New Orleans, and he credits the city

with impressing upon him the importance of earliness in music. Boudreaux is a Louisiana native, and he brings a funky vigour to the music of his associate, constantly breaking up the beat into lively snare-led shuffles, or — as on an intriguingly rejigged version of Gershwin's *Embraceable You* — resorting to mallets to give an almost timpani-like effect to his soloing. In both the first set's closer, *Points to Ponder*, and in the bluesier originals in the second set, Boudreaux proved the perfect foil to Margitza, cushioning his more contemplative moments yet driving him with panache through his music's more energetic passages.

Given the tasteful eloquence of both his tenor and soprano horns during this performance, his ambition to emulate guitarist Pat Metheny by "reaching a lot of people without selling out" should be wholly within his grasp.

CHRIS PARKER

Snow
under
with
more

Bizarre
seldom

Pretty girl, likes a melody

Louise's dive into an unknown pop future in 1995, when she left the Eternal nest to beat her own bedfellow wings, has proved to be a blessed flight to fulfilment. Moreover, it has run parallel with the continued prosperity of her South London soulmates with an entente so cordial as to teach the UN a thing or two.

Such an ascent has involved a marketing tour de force that installed Louise as the young British male's favourite eye candy. The effect (one hesitates to say the intention) has been to divert some attention from her music. But the album, look at the pictures and hey, you get a free record with it.

But that undervalues the 360-degree appeal beaming out from an eager entertainer, appreciated as much by children, couples and mums and dads as by the libidinous lads who consistently vote her Top of the Tunes in monthly magazines. Pop fluff? Anyone who thinks so can put her two bestselling solo albums and seven consecutive hit singles in their pipe and smoke them.

The next stage in her showbiz evolution has been a first UK tour of our larger theatres over the past month. Her commercial pull was further emphasised by an un-subtle sponsorship deal, as the Soft & Gentle No Sweat show made its penultimate stop on the South Coast. In the foyer of the Brighton Centre, lackey dispensed promotional deo-



The lovely Louise, appreciated equally by children, mums, dads and libidinous lads

Louise
Brighton Centre

For a young woman, she took the chance to describe the place as an armpit venue. With anticipation high among the six-to-sixty audience, we heard an a cappella introduction to *In Walked Love*, then in walked Louise, lip-mike in place, demure in red suit with tasselled trousers. Her visual presentation was less glossy than the Vegas sensibilities of Eternal's last concert in April, her biggest prop that ghost-door smile, flashed between almost every vocal line. Ultrabrite or Signal missed the sponsorship boat here.

Hits such as *Undivided*, *Love* snuggled next to new album tracks, including *Trust In You* and *Shut Up & Kiss Me*, in an assiduous show. And no matter how gymnastic the moves, how fast the runs up the staircase, her vocals continued to sound remarkably like the recorded versions.

Amid half a dozen costume changes, her growing portfolio of safe-and-sure singles was fleshed out with an unsurprising disco medley. She returned for a rare moment of raunch on *Naked*, but another smile reassured us that this cheeky chappess was just having another good time.

PAUL SEXTON

CONCERTS: Takemitsu flows too long in Birmingham; an evening of parlour songs in London

Defeated by time

CBSO/Elder
Birmingham

THE best part of Mark Elder's concert with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra was the encore. The programme was ill-conceived from the start. In spite of late adjustments, it remained so to the end.

The original idea was to include both Takemitsu's *From Me Flows What You Call Time* and Ravel's *Valses Nobles et Sentimentales* in the first half of the concert and Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique* in the second. But that reckoning without the length of the Takemitsu and the time needed to set up and dismantle it. The only way was to get the five groups of exotic percussion instruments in place before the concert, drop the Ravel, and restore the orchestra to its conventional layout during the interval.

So the audience entering Symphony Hall was greeted by what looked like festive streamers passing from the circle over the stalls to the front of the platform. In fact, they were representative of the "wind horse" streamers

traditionally used to divine the direction to be taken by Tibetan nomads. In this case, they were used by two of the percussionist soloists to activate wind chimes hanging at the front of the circle.

From Me Flows What You Call Time was written for the hundredth anniversary of Carnegie Hall in 1990 and the first performed by Nexus with the Boston Symphony Orchestra. The five percussionist members of Nexus were on hand on this occasion too, making their magical first entry some minutes after the piece, had begun and mingling the sound of their crotales from the stalls with the orchestra on the platform. From that point on, in spite of a certain ritual fascination and some sensitively conceived textures and colour blends, it was downhill into inconsequentiality.

The performance of Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique* was a good one by any standards, each movement well shaped. But if Elder and the CBSO felt that they owed the audience an encore, after excluding the advertised Ravel item, the *Hungarian March from The Damnation of Faust* was not a good idea. Rather than outline the last movement of the symphony by a devastatingly brilliant account of the march, it would have been wiser to just slip away with the *Ballet des Sylphes*.

GERALD LARNER

So sweet and simple

Heidi Grant-Murphy
Wigmore Hall

THE olde worlde bumped up against the new on Tuesday when the American soprano Heidi Grant-Murphy made her London recital debut in a quaintly old-style programme of vocal album leaves.

If someone were to plan an evening of parlour songs for an Edith Wharton novel, then this — at least as far as the first half was concerned — would fit the bill nicely. Handel's *Care seive* was followed by a single song from Schumann's *Op 39 Liederkreis*; Mendelssohn's *Wings of Song* by Mahler's *Lindenduft*; and Saint-Saëns by Reynaldo Hahn. Each song was delivered in the same diamond-tinted, coloured by the same smiling charm.

As Murphy's sweet and pure lyric soprano sounded Handel's angel trumpets, the gentleman in front of me began to absorb himself in a paper on *The Implications of the Copernican principle for our future prospects*. By the time the scent of linden-blossom had hung heavy over every lingering

note of Mahler's *Ich atmet einen Linden Duft*, and intonation had wavered as vibrato increased, I found myself envying him his distraction. But such an aberrant thought was soon to be corrected by a totally spontaneous cry from the front stalls of "Beautifully beautiful!" after Richard Strauss's *Wasserrose*.

And Murphy's voice is beautiful indeed. Its tenderness to the subterfuge and the coloratura in matters of character and agility suited it well for the rippling brooks, dreaming nightingales and fragrant roses of Strauss's *Sündchen*. And three songs by Fernando Obradors confirmed the soprano's ease in European languages. But her penetration of their differing musical idioms is as yet superficial, as is her husband Kevin Murphy's grasp of their respective pianistic styles.

For Samuel Barber and Aaron Copland the Murphys found a disarming simplicity. *Si l'été* from the *Hermès Songs* was, alas, the only Barber offering in an evening short enough to accommodate more. An even greater simplicity would have made Copland's *Long time ago* and *The little horses* even more effective. Murphy's considerable personal charm needs neither strenuous physical semaphore nor over-sentimental rubato to send it winging on its way.

HILARY FINCH

LONDON

BBC CONCERT ORCHESTRA
LONDON: The popular soprano, Lesley Garrett, teams up with the BBC Concert Orchestra under Peter Rainsford for a Christmas gala concert, which includes seasonal songs as well as a selection of music from the orchestra's repertoire.
Festival Hall, South Bank, SE1 (0171- 924 4242). Tonight, 7.30pm.

CAROL CONCERT: Stephen Layton conducts the Carol Singers accompanied by the City of London Sinfonia in a performance of 20th-century Christmas carols, set by Peter Warlock, Frank Bridge and John Rutter. The soprano Emma Judy and the tenor Ian Boaden are soloists.
St John's, Smith Square, SW1 (0171- 222 1081). Tonight, 7.30pm.

LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA: The Norwegian pianist Leif Ove Andnes demonstrates his technical skill and musical insight as he joins the LSO as soloist in the first of two concerts featuring Beethoven's challenging Piano Concerto No 3. This is coupled with another work by the same composer, the Concerto for Violin and Piano.
Symphony, Tadaaki Otaka conducts. Barbican, St. John's, EC2A (0171- 438 8811). Tonight, tomorrow, 7.30pm.

ROBIN HOOD: During years and seasons special effects are at part of this action-packed performance featuring a star-studded cast of children's favourites. Sylvester McCoy, as Dr Who, leads, plays the evil Sheriff, with Peter Duncan (Blue Peter), Duncan Dais as the outlaw hero.
Lawrence Theatre, Catford, SE6 (0181-890 0002). Tonight and tomorrow, 7.30pm. Sat, 1.30pm. Sun, 2.30pm. Mon-Sat, 7.30pm. Sun, 2.30pm. Then Mon-Sun, various times. Until Jan 18.

HANSEL & GRETEL: Theatre Royal's associate writer, Patrick Prior, transforms the traditional fairy tale into a fun-filled pantomime with foot-stomping music by Greg Palmer. Stage newcomers Hannah Lawrence and Alex Newman play the title roles.
Theatre Royal, Stratford East, Gery Raffles Square, E15 (0181-534 0310). Mon-Sat, 2.15pm and 7.15pm.

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A daily guide to arts and entertainment compiled by Marti Hargie

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How is Birmingham Repertory Theatre planning to spend its £5.7 million of lottery funding? June Ducas talks to the artistic director

Snowed under with money

With regional theatres in the slough of despond — some going dark, others scrimping and saving to prevent a final curtain call — it is glad news that the Birmingham Repertory Theatre has been awarded a £5.7 million stabilisation grant from the Arts Council lottery fund. Wiping out the theatre's £2 million deficit, the one-off sum of money will be paid over three years, more than doubling the annual subsidy. It will give the company breathing space to initiate ambitious new plans aimed at keeping it out of the red hereafter.

In September of last year, in a radical move to assist arts organisations before they bleed to death from lack of day-to-day cash, the Arts Council launched a pilot stabilisation scheme. For the first time £17 million of lottery money would be spent on strengthening artistic endeavour, instead of on a plethora of capital projects. Early this year, 15 out of 129 applicants were selected. Assigning expert advisers to help to prepare individual strategies, the Arts Council announced the awards this autumn, with Birmingham Rep taking the lion's share.

Previously, the council's policy for non-policy, depending on your stance, of cutbacks across the board meant equal misery for all — but no solutions. Apart from putting numerous companies in jeopardy, it diminished the quality of work.

"The grant liberates our artistic ends," says Bill Alexander, the company's artistic director for nearly five years. In the past, to balance the budget, we have had to alternate large-scale works with two or three-handers that are inappropriate for the size of our stage. Now I can plan a

series of six epic productions each year. In baseball terms, we may play fewer games, but the strike rate will be better."

Better not least because the productions will have an extended life — a stimulating factor for the actors, directors and set designers who invest so much creative energy and emotions in them. "Until now, after a mere six-week run the show was thrown into a skip," says Alexander. At the Royal Shakespeare Company, where he was an associate director for 14 years, it would have remained in the repertoire for several years. From next September, when the stabilisation programme gets off the ground, the company's productions will tour at home and abroad — thus earning additional income.

What impressed the Arts Council about Birmingham's bid for cash was its concern for artists, tomorrow's audiences, and new writing. "Actors, as Peter Hall has said, have been subsidising the theatre for years," Alexander says. "We intend to pay them better. After all, we are asking people like Antony Sher and Simon Callow to leave their homes, go on the road and live in digs. However, if our work is unique we will be offering them marvellous artistic opportunities."

Part of the company's adventurous game plan is to reinvigorate the repertoire. "We can't go on doing Wilde, Shaw and Priestley till the cows come home," Alexander says. "There is a limit to how thrilling the umpteenth production of *The Winslow Boy* can be. Even John Gubler, Willie Russell and Ayckbourn are becoming stale. The trouble is that contemporary dramatists have been stilled — forced to keep down the number of roles in their plays." Consequently, few dare tackle a scene that involves more

than two characters speaking to each other. Reserving £1 million specifically for commissioning new work, the company can bring about a sea change. "We want to challenge writers to test themselves against our great dead playwrights, who were adept at juggling five or six characters on stage at once." Aside from the 900-seat main house, the Rep's intimate studio space will concentrate on fostering burgeoning young talent whose writing touches the up-and-coming generation. Over two seasons, ten new plays will be premiered, chosen on merit alone. A permanent group of eight actors will play them in repertory, taking a couple out to the local community. "Nothing quickens the learning process



Weather forecast: Bill Alexander and his snowman friend contemplate a sunny future at Birmingham Rep, including £1 million to spend on commissioning new work

for a dramatist like having work put on," says Alexander. "If we are to boost dwindling audiences, we must offer a theatrical experience beyond compare."

Certainly, he has had tremendous success at Birmingham, which is why he is loyally supported by the local authority and the West Midlands Arts Board. National critics have praised his direction of Harold Pinter's *Old Times*, with Tim Pigott-Smith, and productions of the Bard including *The Merchant of Venice* and *The Tempest*. Last summer, Janet Suzman's superb version of *The Cherry Orchard* received untold plaudits. A joint production with Johannesburg's Market Theatre, it was the start of cross-cultural exchanges. And those

who missed the Rep's magical 1993 rendering of *The Snowman* based on Raymond Briggs's modern fairytale, with a lengthened score by Howard Blake, should immediately besiege the box office — it is on until the end of January.

Apart from highly regarded classics, Alexander envisages varying the bill with what he calls "discovery" plays — very fine dramas that are seldom performed. For ages, he has wanted to present Thomas Dekker's masterpiece, *The Shoemaker's Holiday*, and an adaptation by Peter Whelan (with whom he has a close relationship) of Disraeli's novel *Two Nations*. Both demand huge casts and extravagant sets. If the Rep's prospectus flour-

ishes, it could become the blueprint for the future development of British theatre. Effectively, it is becoming our third flagship company after the National and the currently beleaguered RSC — although Alexander insists that the company has its own identity and vision.

Nevertheless, on his appointment, his mission was clear: to raise the profile of the Brummie theatre. The question was, could he give it national status as Sir Simon Rattle had done for the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, and Peter Wright for the Birmingham Royal Ballet? This is his last chance to prove that he can.

● The Snowman is at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre (0121 236 4455) until Jan 24

Bizarre — but seldom boring

The somewhat chaotic autograph of Donizetti's *Elisabetta* was unearthed piecemeal from the bowels of Covent Garden ten years ago, and the Royal Opera gave the work its premiere in concert form on Tuesday, a nice salute to the composer in his bicentenary year.

Unfortunately, not even the most determinedly romantic journalist could hail it as a long-lost masterpiece. It is very interesting, in its provenance apart from anything else, and that's about it.

It started out as an early opera semiseria (1827) in Naples, the impetuous tale of *Donizetti in due ore* (Eight Months in Two Hours). It was often revised but less often performed in Italy at the time; Donizetti turned it into an opera comique for Paris in the 1830s, when it failed to reach the stage (the theatre went bankrupt) and then brought it to London and combined the two versions, in Italian, for Her Majesty's; once more, it failed to reach the stage (one reason was that the theatre burnt down) and ended up in the Bow Street cellars.

The plot is almost as picturesque. The resourceful heroine, the falsely accused of some misdemeanour, has been exiled to Siberia. She decides to walk to Moscow (or Petersburg, take your pick from the text) to clear her name (first act) and succeeds (third act). The second act is crowded with event: she encounters the false accuser, who out of guilt has become a ferryman on the River Kama, then a horde of Tartars who threaten (unsuccessfully) her honour; there is a hurricane; the river bursts its banks; the stage directions announce handsily, and Elisabetta is saved by floating downstream on the false accuser's dead daughter's coffin. The Royal

OPERA
Elisabetta
Donizetti

Opera must be very glad that it wasn't having to stage all this.

There is an unfinished feel to the score as performed; had Donizetti seen it into the theatre, he would doubtless have revised and filled out some of the bald recitative, tightened one or two passages and turned some corners more gracefully, but the editorial team has rightly given it to us as the composer left it. As always with Donizetti, even routine passages are suddenly illuminated with a touch of instrumental colour or a startling harmonic progression that really make you sit up. *Elisabetta* is bizarre, but seldom boring. The intervention of the horde — "A rollicking band of Tartars we" — would be W.S. Gilbert's version — is great fun.

Carlo Rizzi, a renowned Donizettian, conducted with innate sympathy, and the good, solid cast gave their all — as listeners to next Monday's broadcast will hear. The needle-fine Andrea Rost negotiated Elisabetta's coloratura with aplomb (she has a merry waltz finale) and Alastair Miles brought great distinction to the false accuser's big scene of remorse. There is a barely relevant comic character, sung with engaging style by Alessandro Corbelli, and the young Peruvian tenor Juan Diego Flórez took over at short notice as the father; his voice is as yet on the dry side, but he is intensely musical, has no fear of top notes and made much of his substantial third-act number. Yes, very interesting indeed.

RODNEY MILNES

Hooked on Never-say-die-Land

According to Barrie's stage-directions to Peter Pan, Captain Hook is "never more sinister than when he is most polite, and the elegance of his diction, the distinction of his demeanour show him to be of a different class from his crew". Add a modicum of sly self-mockery, and the ability to sneer that his thin moustachios slant up to his eyebrows, and he could be talking of Ian McKellen. His Hook is all quivering preciosity, mournful gentility and Old Etonian world-weariness. He is, as Barrie said he must be, the kind of pirate who says "sorry" to those he makes walk the plank — and, as Barrie didn't say, he is careful to pronounce the thing "pivank".

The version of *Peter Pan* at the National is directed by John Caird and is essentially the same, down to an ending not in the

Peter Pan
Oliver

original, as the one he and Trevor Nunn created in 1982. There is a narrator in the avuncular form of Alec McCowen, who ambles about in deerstalker kit looking like Barrie and giving us extracts from those costly verbose stage-directions. And Peter Pan himself is not a swaggering girl in drag but a boy in Daniel Evans's performance a nice mix of callow bravado and skinniness, angular vulnerability.

Once again the designer is John Napier, this time with the great Olivier revolve at his creative command. He starts with the elaborate outside and snug innards of the Darlings' Bloomsbury house. Then it's off, via St Paul's, to the most marvellous Never Land anyone could have imagined, let alone seen. It is a slowly-twirling mix of weeping willows and firs, lilies and cacti and poppies, cherry blossoms and a tapering tree and a knobby, gnarled tree. Napier certainly creates some stunning effects. Though Tuesday's premiere was slowed up by a diving mermaid dislodging her shoulder, or in the scene in the lagoon is especially cleverly done, with Botticelli lovelies contemplating their fishes' tails while boys splash off a spongy rock into shiny, undulating sheets that look like turquoise waves. But never do you feel that the lovingly handled spectacle interferes with clarity or flow.

Perhaps the tone is lighter and, when battle on the pirate-ship commences, campier than it reputedly was back in 1982; but I don't think anybody in the audience was complaining. Let those who feel surly complain of the play's undoubted sentimentality, and those of earnest



Ian McKellen fits Barrie's view of Hook, and Daniel Evans is a brave Peter

disposition inspect its Freudian undertones. Yes, it is recognisably the work of the Barrie who tried to please his rejecting mother by dressing up and imitating her favourite son, who had died in an accident. Yes, everyone in the play craves a woman, not for the old, obvious reasons, but to nurse and fuss over him. Yes, the hero tries indefinitely to prolong an idealised boyhood, as poor, sad Barrie would have liked to have done. But do you care when you can see

McKellen gravely humming it up on his rococo poop and skull-decorated deck? Or when you watch Evans's Pan and Claudie Blakley's Wendy fly under the stars and over Big Ben? Or when a Trinker Bell with a sort of Mae West mumble swirls in spotlight round the lost boys' cave? No, I don't think so.

BENEDICT NIGHTINGALE

● This review appeared in late editions of The Times yesterday

NEW CLASSICAL CDS: Brits on Broadway, spice for Christmas and scintillating Prokofiev

MUSICAL

John Higgins

■ CABARET
Friedman/Dench/Pryce/
NSO/Edwards
TER Masterworks CDTER:
1210 (two CDs) ***
£26.99

WITH *Chicago* set for long residence in the Strand it is no bad moment to revisit Kander and Ebb's earlier hit, *Cabaret*. The cast of this 1993 recording is mainly British but the all-round verve generated, especially at the Kit Kat Klub, is strictly Broadway. For that, credit must go to the punchy conducting of John Owen Edwards. But the presence of two old hands has also surely had its effect.

Judi Dench, London's first Sally Bowles, is back, this time as Fraulein Schneider. And Fred Ebb, who provided the lyrics, now also sings some of them in a gravelly voice as the Jewish fruitier who marries her. Authenticity is assured.

Maria Friedman is careful not to make Sally too much of a star, a trap Liza Minnelli fell into in the movie. Miss Bowles is an interwar dropout, more talented in the bedroom than the green room, as Friedman suggests with a husky and sexy delivery. Cliff (Greg Edelman), the boy who falls for her, is not much of a part musically and will always be under the shadow of the MC, a mastery study in greed and opportunism from Jonathan Pryce. Note too John Mark Ainsley as a member of the Hitlerjugend.

Any asperities in that Prom performance have been ironed out. The silky strings and sensual saxophone in *Juliet the Young Girl* are more refined, while the music of Romeo and Juliet together is rapturous. The orchestra sounds, if possible, even better in the symphony. The end of the first movement, for example, offers some splendidly rasping brass choruses and deep, sonorous string tone. In the slow movement, the string sound acquires an apt glacial purity and an unearthly beauty as the music glides to its tranquil conclusion. All the stops are pulled out for a scintillating finale.

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There are the sonorous Magnificats and Alleluias, but also the wonderfully intimate miniatures which came about as a result of the

increasing poverty of resources in the Dresden Court Chapel during the Thirty Years War. Soprano Tessa Bonner and alto Richard Wyn Roberts duet in a perfect, tiny Annunciation scene. *Sei gegrüßet, Maria*. And, in the voice of tenor Andrew King, *O Jesu, nomen dulce* is, indeed, "honey to the mouth, melody to the ear", every bit as delicious as the wordplay — "In ore mel, in aure melos" — of the original Latin.

Here, too, are Giovanni Gabrieli's splendid Venetian Canzonas for cornets and sackbuts; and a Sonata by his colleague Francesco Usper in which the deep carmines of a choir of run-bones are pierced by the golden rays of high cornets.

ORCHESTRAL
Barry Millington

■ PROKOFIEV
Symphony No 5: Romeo & Juliet
New York Philharmonic/
Masur
Teldec 4509 96301-2 ***
£15.49

THE New York Philharmonic and its music director Kurt Masur visited the Proms in 1996 and gave a memorable concert, including Brahms's Violin Concerto with Mutter the soloist, and Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* music. The Masur/Mutter account of the Brahms was released on disc last month, and now the Prokofiev, recorded in New York last year, is issued, coupled with the same composer's Fifth Symphony.

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CDs reviewed in The Times can be ordered from the Times Music Shop on 0345 023498

PUBLISHED IN A LIFETIME: BOOKS THAT SHOWED THE WAY

Bel Mooney found her horizons broadened by Sylvia Plath

In 1965, in my first term at University College London, my then boyfriend gave me *Ariel* (published by Faber that year) "to broaden your mind". He was right: my course offered one optional modern paper which ended on the eve of the Second World War. I immersed myself in her poetry's savage depths like someone stumbling across an oasis in what seemed like a desert of Beowulf, Milton and Pope. At 20, I identified with Plath's almost-hysterical self-assertion — what Richard Wilbur called "brilliant negative". It led me to Ted Hughes, of course, and to Robert Lowell, Anne Sexton, Hart Crane and Theodore Roethke.

Now I can return to Plath and value afresh her genius in transforming a personal, crippling disability into universal art. I have lost the youthful yearning for "relevance", although in fact the poems are closer to the dark ambivalences of a married woman with children. *Ariel* still stands as a revolutionary text, its axe-words splitting the silence of self-denial and ringing out the equal right to rage against the darkness, but embrace it too.

In 1974, reading that Philip Larkin had produced his first volume of poetry for ten years, I rushed out and bought two copies of *High Windows*. Then I responded

to the witty misanthropy of *Vers de Société* and *This Be the Verse*, as well as the sweet sadness of *The Explosion*. Now I return again and again to poems like *Show Saturday, Going, The Trees and Cut Grass*, embracing their quietly lyrical conservatism with a relief that would have shocked my younger self. Middle age, perhaps — but also an impotent rage against the rebranded blandness of this "new" Britain. How Larkin would have set on his hounds of language!

During the Seventies I discovered the novels of Patrick White, and read all of them voraciously, even registering for a (still unwritten) PhD. *The Tree of Man* stands tall even in White's rich, dense forest — one of the great spiritual novels of this half-century. A young man, Stan Parker, hacks out a home and a life in the bush, takes a wife, fights in the Great War, experiences flood and fire, grows old and dies in his garden, surrounded now by tacky suburbs — leaving his wife Amy to mourn and life to go on. The novel is about that majestic within the silences of "ordinary" people. In elliptical, daringly poetic yet paradoxically flat prose, *The Tree of Man* revivifies ideas of grace and redemption with an intensity that dazzles the unbeliever.

b. 1946

Michèle Roberts was sparked by new light shed on the secrets of *Jane Eyre*

In 1850 Charlotte Brontë wrote to her publisher, George Smith: "You should be very glad that books cannot talk to each other as well as to their readers". Conceive the state of your warehouse if such were the case... Terrible too would be the quarrelling... Still I like the notion of a mystic whispering among the lettered leaves — and perhaps at night... such a whispering may be heard — by those who have ears to hear.

One of those who did listen was Jean Rhys. She read *Jane Eyre* and wrote the story which lurks in its silences. In *Wide Sargasso Sea* Rhys took one of the works of genius of the 19th century and turned it inside-out to create one of the works of genius of the 20th century.

Genius, a term invented by men and used to describe men, excludes women, but I use it of both Brontë and Rhys to point out the paradox of their achievement: both of them wrote brilliantly, as no one had done before, about women, and both force us to question whether femininity isn't a kind of strait-jacket in some cases.

In *Wide Sargasso Sea* (published in 1966) this brilliance ensures that not only is Bertha Mason's story brought slap bang up to date, but

that *Jane Eyre* itself can never be the same again. Charlotte Brontë's Mrs Rochester is compiled from 19th-century white, middle-class terrors of black people, female sexuality and madness, all rolled together into a figure who's part diseased animal and part vampire. Rhys takes us back to the beginning of the story, to an island paradise lost: it's an astonishing novel, which stands on its own. I first read it when I was 15 or so — and have felt haunted by it ever since.

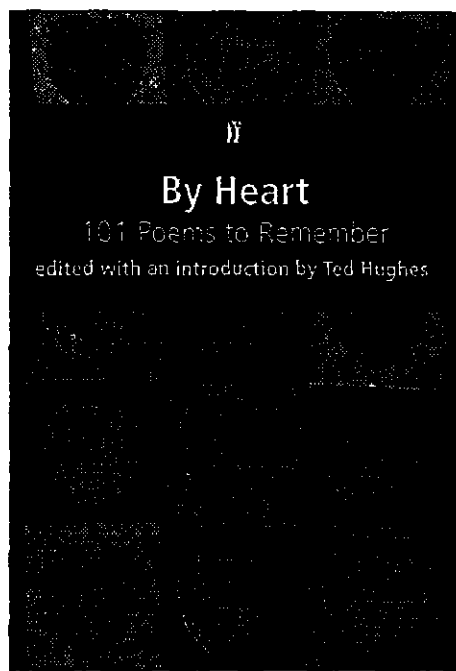
A personal definition of a classic is a novel I never tire of rereading. Paul Bailey's *Gabriel's Lament* (1986) is that. I came upon it after catching up on all the women writers left out of my education. It was charming to encounter a male writer who wanted to investigate what makes men tick. *Gabriel's Lament* is a masterpiece of sly, wrenching, tragic-comedy that takes suburban life and fathers and sons and immortalises them through the brilliance of its dialogue, its sparkling jokes.

The Ballad of Peckham Rye (1960) by Muriel Spark is another such novel, completely surprising, funny and cruel. Spark changed our literary landscape with her books; this tale is unmatchable and unmissable: gloriously and insistently original.

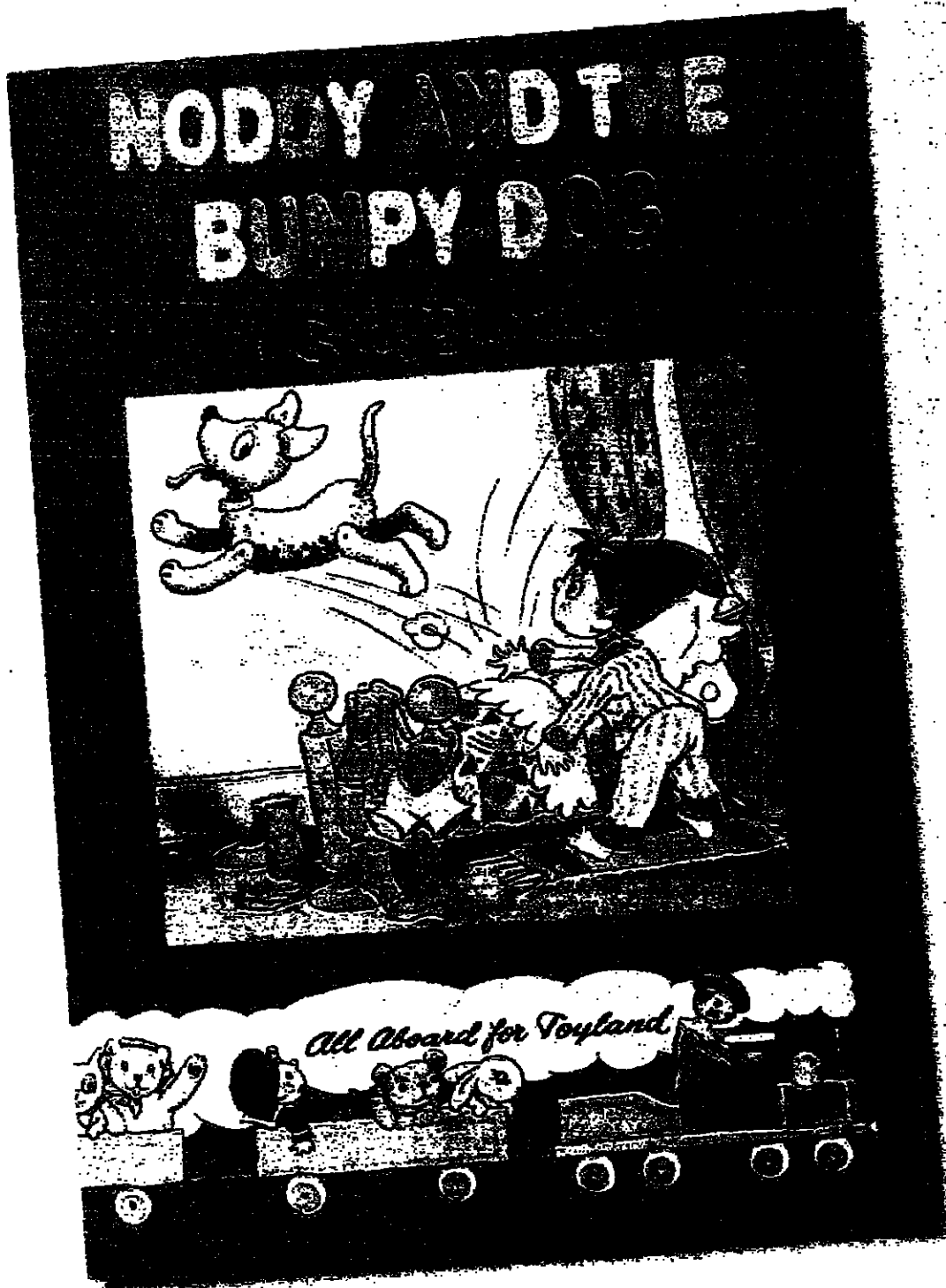
b. 1949



A gift they'll never forget.



ff
faber and faber



Influences which last longest start in childhood. Thanks to Enid Blyton's *Noddy* books, I still overvalue personal independence, love the underdog, crave cakes at teatime and mistrust Mr Plod.

The writer has been reviled for undemanding language: but you don't notice that when you're patronised by everybody and baby-talk seems the natural form of adult expression.

She has been condemned as politically incorrect, but *Toy Town* is nothing if not a plural society, where Sally Skittle and the Wobbly Man are unencumbered by their disabilities. Her books are not well written, but their greatness lies in the depiction of character. *Noddy* is one of the most under-estimated creations in English literature: a subtle, complex personality, whose moodiness, selective arrogance and wildness of judgment repeatedly test the affection of his readers and friends.

Busybodies may banish him from the shelves, but his place in tradition is secure. I love the best story of *Noddy and the Bumpy Dog* (1957) — a typical fable in which the under-appreciated outsider, "waggy and licky and noisy and rough" — saves the day and wins acceptance.

A dog is also the hero in my favourite Iris Murdoch novel, *The*

Felipe Fernández-Armesto says thanks to Noddy

b. 1950



Nice and the Good (1968). I discovered Iris Murdoch and Oxford in the same moment and they are confused in my mind. Her books, in which the characters' intellectualism never inhibits their spontaneity, perfectly mirrored the real life of the university. The talent in which she surpasses every other living English novelist is in making people behave utterly surprisingly, yet with total consistency, so that every twist seems both strange and convincing.

A few writers of fiction are models for historians: from Borges, for example, you learn how to approach objectivity by shifting perspective; from *Lampedusa*, how

to evoke a sense of period. Iris Murdoch's insights into the routine nature of surprise have helped me understand the characters I have to deal with. Tiresomely, they write their own plots and do it with a freedom an unassisted imagination could never give them.

There are a lot of history books in my life, but for the present purpose one elects itself: Joseph Needham's *Science and Civilisation in China* (1956 in progress). Like all geniuses, Needham could be misled by an excess of cleverness. He espoused an odd, faintly mystical mixture of High Church Anglicanism and naive Maoism. He had daft convictions, such as that undocumented Chinese explorers had founded Mesopotamian civilisation.

Yet his masterpiece is unmatched in our times for most of what I admire in history: scholarship, ambition, sensibility, fidelity to evidence, boldness in argument, impassioned curiosity, unlimited range — and sheer mastery, sure pilotage amid vast oceans of material.

He died leaving it unfinished, but the first few volumes changed the way I looked at the world. When those creatures of my imagination, the Galactic Museum-Keepers, look back on our past, they will centre their display on China and cram Western civilisation into a corner of some small vitrine.

Malcolm Bradbury steered his course by Saul Bellow's compass and travelled through a winter night

When I first started out as a young writer and obsessive novelist in the mid-Fifties, my ambitions were shaped by a small number of central books. I'm sure every writer has a pile of such books: books that are more than books, that create the belief that writing matters, that literary vocation is important, that there are always fresh ways in which the narrative of one's age can be told.

I'd read widely in fiction: many Victorian novels, a lot of the great "modern novelists", like Lawrence, Forster, Woolf, Celine and Mann. All had a considerable influence, but in truth by the mid-Fifties the modern novel was already not just a generation but a political and artistic culture away. The important books are closer in time, the ones that catch era, generation, mood. I found them first mostly in Existentialist Paris. Two books that greatly mattered to me were Albert Camus' *The Outsider*, first published in 1942, and Samuel Beckett's magnificent tragicomedy, *Molloy*, which appeared in 1951.

Yet I felt far greater affinity with American fiction, then beginning to sweep into Britain. Somewhere at the start of the Fifties I picked up a book by a writer I hadn't heard of: it was Saul Bellow's second novel *The Victim*. It too had the prevailing existential anxieties; it acknowledged the Holocaust and nuclear unease, the mood of urban aimlessness, of moral disaster seeking moral redemption. Written in English, it deployed a vital, near-lyrical prose. It influenced my writing, steered my way into American fiction. Like many British

Jeremy Irons and Meryl Streep in the film of *Fowles's* novel

writers, I've followed Bellow's work with passion ever since, and regard his *Herzog* (1964) as one of the best modern books.

It wasn't until the end of the Sixties I found an English novel that had such a strong and direct impact. Then came John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969), to my mind one of the best British postwar novels.

It built a cunning, extraordinary bridge between the grand Victorian novel, with its social grasp, and the anxious, textually self-critical modern novel — where character is a paradox, narrative a problem, the author's authority always unsure.

A more recent postwar novel joins my list of core books. My own writing changed, as writing does; I grew ever more fascinated by the multiplicity of the means of fiction, the extraordinary richness of

genre. In 1981 Italo Calvino published *If on a winter's night a traveller*. Maybe it takes another writer to love it as much as I do. It joins the special list of novels about novels — *Tristram Shandy*, *Jacques the Fatalist*, *Ulysses* — that show the complexity, variety, wonder of the form. Ten different stories in different genres are started. There's a reader (indeed, two of them) in the text. It's a book about the great play of fiction: why we need it, what it does to us.

For some time it's seemed clear to me that I've been living through an age of the novel. Each generation finds its distinctive voice for fiction, generates its own originalities. When the record is properly written, the novels of this century's second half will, I believe, seem quite as powerful as those of the widely studied first. For me the books I've mentioned have special meaning, forming the tiny pile I'd despair to be without. But they also form milestones in the great 20th-century journey of fiction, which has been a good one for us all.

b. 1932



Howard Davies fled Manchester in the company of David Storey

The year of my birth, 1951, has never been cited as a great turning point in the world of letters. And some of the long-lived 20th-century writers for whom I care most, John Cowper Powells, for example, or Wyndham Lewis, had written their best works well before then.

But a good few of the most dog-eared read and reread books on my shelves were first published in my lifetime. Erich Heller's *The Disinherited Mind* — essays in modern German literature and thought — appeared first in 1952. I did not, I think, read the first edition immediately on publication: my copy is dated 1966. As a teenager, I first inhaled the excitement of Goethe, Nietzsche, Rilke, Spengler and Kafka through Heller. The theory of eternal recurrence was heady stuff for a Manchester Grammar School boy in the Sixties and it remains so today. No other work of literary criticism has left me with such an enduring love for its subject. Even Spengler's *Decline of the West* remains suffused in a rosy glow.

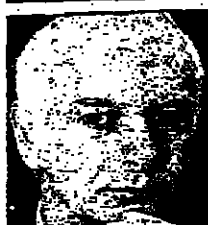
But wild-eyed enthusiasm for gloomy Germans was no basis for a career, so I drifted towards modern history and thence to diplomacy. My interest was lukewarm, however, until I read A. J. P. Taylor's *Origins of the Second*

World War, first published in 1961. There remain few historians who, like Taylor, can reach the general reader with a sharp and original thought. Perhaps in Norman Davies we have found another, but he needs 1,500 pages to make his point.

David Storey is not a sceptic; though his prose is as limp as Taylor's. *Flight into Camden*, published in 1961, is for me, his masterpiece. Perhaps, as an ex-northern grammar schoolboy in London, I identified too much with Yorkshire-born Margaret, who flees south to an adulterous affair with a teacher in Camden. Though I was from the other side of the Pennines, my teacher was an unmarried Australian and we lived in Islington — a wholly different cultural landscape.

The clash of cultures and mores, was, nonetheless, quite sharp. And I was thrilled by Storey's insights into my human condition. For years I loved friends with aggressive argument to the effect that Storey is Britain's greatest postwar novelist. I was touched when a friend gave me a first edition — but it was clear that he did so to close off the debate. Storey himself has, sadly, fallen silent. *Flight into Camden* will live on, though, even if Yorkist immigrants now philander in Dalston or Poplar.

b. 1951



Roger Scruton was cloistered in Eliot's mysterious rose garden

Many writers publishing in my lifetime have had a profound effect on me, even though no single work encapsulates their influence. This is true — to take four examples at random — of Leavis, Larkin, Plath and Solzhenitsyn. Asked to choose three books, rather than three authors, I finally settled on these: *Four Quartets*, by T. S. Eliot, *Philosophical Investigations*, by Ludwig Wittgenstein, and the trilogy of novels (*Molloy*, *Malone Dies*, and *The Unnamable*) by Samuel Beckett. These works have two very important things in common: first, that every word and every implication are meticulously weighed; secondly, that the movement (whether of thought or feeling) is in each case entirely compelled and never imported. In Eliot, Wittgenstein, and Beckett, you encounter three contrasting forms of literary urgency, in which words flow from

the being of the creator with a rightness and exactness that cannot be improved upon. (So, at any rate, it seems to me.) And with this formal perfection there goes an unbrookable sincerity which forces you to respond to these works, not as literature only, but as visions of the human world — which is to say, as literature in its highest form.

I came across *Four Quartets* at school; it was one of a small collection of books chosen by Faber for its first series of paperbacks. I did not understand, nor do I fully understand even now, the meaning of that rose garden, with its invisible presences, and its dry concrete pool. But the words sounded deep within me. I was a modern adolescent, severed from prayer and abstinence and from every religious idea. *Four Quartets* conveyed a new insight into the modern world. Under the impact of those carefully distilled images, the place in which I found myself

became a place of pilgrimage. The modern soul could still, Eliot told me, find redemption and tranquillity in the midst of disease. Was this a trick of language? Thirty-five years later, I can say with conviction that it was not.

Beckett too was favourite reading matter at school. I loved those careful, tetchy sentences shaped from the language of accusation, but rebuking no one in particular, and for nothing at all. Beckett's anti-heroes were my role models, and in time I came to discover the hidden wisdom in those most poet of modern texts — the wisdom that looks death in the fact and exchanges a corny joke with it.

It was during my first year at university that I discovered *Philosophical Investigations*. Heart and brain were oppressed by the donnish prose of academic philosophy and Wittgenstein came as a bolt from the blue prose which deals with abstract questions, but so abundant with irony and imagery and so animated by thought that I was cured at once of the doubts that threatened to abort my philosophical career. Moreover, I found it this work arguments which radically altered my vision of reality, in particular the subtle discussion of the self and its grammar which finally lifted philosophy clear (for me as for many others) from the cesspit of phenomenology. Repeated rereadings have convinced me that this work is the greatest work of philosophy since Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, and the true antidote to the pseudo-science that is everywhere undermining thought and wisdom.

There is one other thing that all the three books I have chosen have in common: they are all death-acknowledging, and therefore life-affirming. Most books published now are, by contrast, death-fearing and therefore life-negating.

b. 1944



Helen Dunmore became intoxicated by the rowdy humour of Kingsley Amis

I was a year old when *Lucky Jim* was published, in an England of landladies, cars with starting-handles, guiltless smoking, ex-servicemen and Bakelite mugs. I can't remember when I first read it — early, probably, to get all the jokes. But I loved it then, as I do now. It has always made me laugh out loud. Here is the charmless Margaret in a rictus of self-abandon: "She drained her glass with a quick, gay movement. 'Beer,' she said, 'Buy me beer. The night is young.' There is Jim's nightmare weekend with the Welchies, his denunciation of Bertrand Welch as "You bloody old tower-faced boot-faced totem pole on a crap reservation", and finally the tour-de-force of his drunken public lecture on Merrie England. Kingsley Amis is brilliant on altered states of mind: drunkenness, madness, frenzy. *Lucky Jim* is a flawless comic novel.

When I was 21 and working as a teacher in Finland, I first read Doris Lessing's novels. I borrowed them from Turku public library, and would lie on my bed during the long dark afternoons reading about Martha Quest's life as if my own depended on it. Her journey from a remote African farm to Salisbury, then on to London, mirrors Lessing's own life. Doris Lessing changes her readers: you cannot think in quite the same way once you have experienced that sensory power and intelligence.

Osip Mandelstam was a Russian poet who died during the Stalinist purges. He was one of the Acmeist group, and his work wasn't published in English until many years after his death. His wife, Nadezhda, memorised it, or it would have been lost entirely. His poetry has influenced me deeply since 1974, when I bought his *Selected Poems*, translated by David McDuff. Too deeply, perhaps. But slowly, the excess of influence sits away, leaving only the residue which will be of real benefit to a young poet.

Mandelstam is a great poet, saturated in classical culture yet tenderly responsive to everyday life. The Rivers Press edition offers the Russian text, as well as McDuff's translations, although I know just enough Russian to read the poems aloud. Above all I hear the echo of Mandelstam's triumphant affirmation in appalling times: "With my bloodless mouth/ I whisper: I was born in the night of the second and third/ of January in the untrustworthy year of '91, and the centuries/ surround me with fire."

b. 1952



TIMES WRITERS MAKE A PERSONAL CHOICE

Kenneth Baker ventured beyond Burke and then waited for Godot

Most of my political beliefs were fashioned by books written before 1934, principally the writings of Edmund Burke. Any child of my generation could not but be inspired by the rumbling rhetoric of Churchill, which evoked patriotism, sacrifice and pride over history. But of all the books on conservatism written in the past 50 years, the one which made the most appeal to my sort of conservatism is Michael Oakeshott's *Rationalism in Politics and other Essays* (1962).

The reason why the Conservative Party has survived is that deep in our nation there is a conservative disposition which reveals itself in certain conservative attitudes. Oakeshott writes: "The disposition to be conservative is then warm and positive in respect of enjoyment and correspondingly cool and critical in respect of change and innovation... What others plausibly identify as timidity he recognises himself as rational prudence. What others interpret as inactivity, he recognises as a disposition to enjoy, rather than exploit."

The second book is *Four Quarters* (1944) by T. S. Eliot. In these four poems, Eliot writes of the importance of custom and convention, of the significance of regularity and of a respect for history. All of

these aspects of human life are, at least for the moment, unfashionable. Yet they are the very things that make the human condition bearable and they are the essential buttresses of a civilised society. It has been for me a consolation and a reaffirmation of faith to be reminded that the past, present and future are but part of a great continuum.

"The moment of the rose and the moment of the yew-tree/ Are of equal duration. A people without history/ Is not redeemed from time, for history is a pattern/ Of timeless moments. So, while the light fails/ On a winter's afternoon, in a secluded chapel/ History is now and England."

My third book is Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1953). When I saw the first production of this play at the Criterion Theatre in the Fifties I was completely mesmerised. I was lucky in that I had been taken regularly by my parents to the Richmond Rep where we had seen plays by writers such as Pinero, Priestley, Maugham, Rattigan and occasionally Shaw. *Godot* was utterly different: two tramps waiting for something, for someone, and meeting a great, bullying figure. The play awakened in me an awareness of the greater complexity of human desire, ambition and purpose.



b. 1934

Ian McIntyre confesses his admiration for the 18th-century London of Boswell

The striking title of D. R. Davies's study of the General's *Down Peacock's Feathers* (1942), comes from an old homily called *The Misery of Man* — "Wherefore, good people, let us beware of such hypocrisy, vain-glory, and justifying of ourselves. Let us look upon our feet: and then down peacock's feathers, down proud heart, down vile clay, frail and brittle vessels." The book appeared during the war. Davies wrote it because he discovered that nobody else had ever thought of doing so. "I am all but clouting the secularised mind — hard," he wrote in his preface. "The General Confession is a magnificent [ledge-hammer] I read it when I was a schoolboy and it provided me with many important map references that have stayed with me."

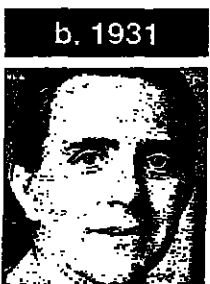
The second book lodged in my mind from those formative years was by an opposition backbencher, Quintin Hogg, and his book was called *The Case for Conservatism*. It was published at the tail end of 1947, little more than two years after his party had suffered a crushing defeat.

Hogg sets out basic Conservative principles and ideas, and examines the case of his Labour and Liberal opponents. He does so robustly and entertainingly. He shows no incli-

nation to snuggle up to any other party for short-term advantage. He reflects, in a cheerful, Ken Clarkeish sort of way that no government, however good, remains popular indefinitely. "An exultant majority enthusiastically proclaims a new era to a delighted electorate... War, poverty, ugliness, squalor, disease, bad weather will vanish in the midst..." Fifty years on, in all sorts of ways, it remains a tremendously good read.

My third seminal book is Boswell's *London Journal 1762-1763* (1950). It appeared during my first year at Cambridge. Nobody with a professional interest in the 18th century can get very far without the help of American academic scholarship — W. S. Lewis's magisterial edition of the correspondence of Horace Walpole, J. L. Clifford's *Young Samuel Johnson*, for example.

But for sheer pleasure and refreshment I go back to the *Journal*. It stands, as its editor Frederick Pottle puts it in his wise and penetrating introduction, "between the poles of Pepys and Rousseau." It is neither autobiography nor apocrypha. Boswell more than one-upped the strange cities of his travels to the omnipotent Kublai Khan. Gradually these cities begin to fold in upon one another, and we realise that only one city is being



b. 1931



Traveller who inspired Calvino — and Winterson: Marco Polo, from the first printed edition of his journey

I love Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities* (1972; English edition, 1974). Does that seem dramatic? I don't know of any other way to approach books except through the heart. To me, books, real ones, are intimacy, abandonment, risk and pact. They are a blood bond: a connection between writer and reader that begins in the moment of possession and is reinforced through time. My private library is located twice: once in my study, again, in my self. These are the moving books that travel with me: a cargo of images and language unseparated from life. In so much as I am, they are.

I did not read *Invisible Cities* until ten years after it was first published. When I did read it, I was 23 and writing *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*. In that book I did not want either to be tethered to autobiography or marooned in make-believe. All quest stories feature a seeker and a sought, or call it hero and prize. Calvino fused these motifs. In a long series of short pieces, the hero Marco Polo reaches the strange cities of his travels to the omnipotent Kublai Khan. Gradually these cities begin to fold in upon one another, and we realise that only one city is being

Jeanette Winterson loved Calvino's Venice



b. 1959

described: Venice. As unlined pasts and beckoning futures become equally real, or equally unreal, the only possibility is invention.

I read *The Diaries of Virginia Woolf* five volumes, 1915-41, published by the Hogarth Press 1977-84) one by one as they appeared. To me they were talismans. I was 17 when Volume One was published and saving up to go to Oxford. Woolf's work, and bit by bit, her life, were an affirmation of all I felt to be valuable. Valuable and fragile, for it is so easy to question to

death the importance of art and culture in our society. Is it for everyone? Is it elitist? Who should pay? These are uniquely 20th-century questions and ones which Woolf tried to answer, had to answer, because for her, art and life were written together on the same page. In these diaries there is detachment, analysis, objectivity, wit, but the fluid that fills the pen is the stuff of life itself.

As a teenager, and now 20 years later, this hauling together of life's elements — the ride on the top of a bus, the seat in the stalls at the opera, a book to read, a holiday, a dog barking, Dante by the fire, and pain, and loss, and fear and death — seems to me to be a true rendering of the account. Art is made out of human passions, emotions, energies and cannot be separated from them, any more than human life can live a single day without telling itself a story.

Art, when it happens, challenges the "I" that we are. The poems in *The Thing in The Gate Stone* by Alice Oswald (1996) are not confessional, angry, political: their shock is in the renewal of image and language that puts our everyday clichés and dullness to shame. I bought 20 copies.

Lisa Jardine, cyberfeminist, mourns the manual to her Apple Mac

Books have been a crucial influence in my life since childhood — one of my earliest memories is of going alone to Boots with a precious book token and picking out the biggest book I could find, working on the principle that I wanted the maximum number of words possible for my money. It is really hard to narrow those which have affected me down to a mere three.

I was still reading mathematics at Cambridge when a friend reading English gave me Raymond Williams's *The Long Revolution* (1961). From Williams I learnt that the creative mind had a special part to play in shaping contemporary society. I discovered from him why art and literature were of critical importance for someone with burning left-wing political principles. *The Long Revolution* was probably responsible for my switching from science to humanities a year later.

Some years later, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, published in 1981, persuaded me that the novel at its greatest is still an important force for understanding and change in the world. The mad, bad and funny adventures of Rushdie's hero Saleem, born with India's independence at midnight on August 15, 1947, are an allegory

for India's own progress to maturity. The novel also showed me that the English novel had given way to the world novel in English.

My last life-changing book has to be both more banal and yet in the end more far-reaching in its impact on my life. It is the Apple Macintosh user manual which introduced me to my first Mac somewhere around 1985. The manual is long lost, but the access it gave me to the world of new technology permanently transformed my working life. I can't even remember writing longhand: copying on a typewriter is a dim, distant memory. My old Selectrix typewriter (itself a piece of new technology in its day) turned up in our loft when we were clearing it out last weekend. My son thought it was a valuable antique, but I only got that in the Seventies.

Since a lost manual can hardly be considered a personal landmark, I substitute for it Suddie Plant's *Zero and Ones: Digital Women and the New Technology* (1997). I laughed all the way through her mischievous account of the special relationship of women to cyberculture. She describes my own love affair with new technology beautifully. Let's all be cyberfeminists as we approach the millennium.



b. 1944

Peter Stothard sneaks under the wire with Dodds's irrational Greeks

When the rules of this Christmas game were first formulated, I felt confident of at least one choice. Edward Fraenkel's three-volume text and commentary on Aeschylus's *Agamemnon*, the quintessential work of modern classical scholarship by the finest scholar I have ever been privileged to hear. Some of my allotted words would have been used to defend his art of line-by-line analysis against trendy recent theories that such enterprises are small-minded, "atomistic" and damaging to overall comprehension of the texts. Sadly, it turned out that Fraenkel's *Agamemnon* was published in 1950, a few months before my date of birth.

My second choice, *The Greeks and the Irrational* by E. R. Dodds, was almost barred for the same reason. Dodds too wrote brilliant commentaries but he also liberated a lifetime of classical students from the view that every Ancient Greek was a logical little Aristotle at heart. His most famous collection of lectures, delivered in 1949 but not published, thankfully, until 1951, is an exquisite chronicle of ancient madness.

It tellingly poses the question of why an open society of consumers and free individuals may be the one

in most danger from malign irrational forces. And, no small thing in itself, Dodds's work also inspired Donna Tartt's wonderful novel, published in 1992, *The Secret History*.

Dodds was a close friend of W. H. Auden, from whose work I would certainly have chosen if his best poems had not been from the years before 1951. The closest to a disciple of Auden today is James Fenton. My second book is his collection, *The Memory of War*, first published in 1982, which includes *A German Requiem*, *Dead Soldiers and The Ship*, all of which are poems that both power themselves into the general canon and spark intense personal recollections of subjects, spaces and years.

Safely inside my life came Michael Oakeshott's *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays*, published in 1962, which spawned decades of doubts about whether any government minister who promised to improve condition X by action Y knew what he was endeavouring to do, let alone how to do it. We are now in that part of the political cycle when rational progress is back in fashion. Labour leaders are daily strapping logic more tightly to their clipboards. It must be time to read Oakeshott again.



b. 1951

A. S. Byatt was awakened by the resonant voice of Wallace Stevens

My three books, it turns out, are all to do with the problem that has obsessed me since I began to think — why make works of art at all? Literature is what I most care about, but I had a socially responsible upbringing, and have, for a resolute agnostic, a religious temperament. So I was never quite sure that literature ought to matter as much as it did (and does) to me.

My first choice was in fact only published as a book in 1997. It is *Existentialists and Mystics*, Iris Murdoch's collected writings on philosophy and literature. These essays over the years have given me all sorts of new ways of thinking about art, morals, politics, Freud and Marx.

Her essay *Against Dryness* in 1961 was a wise analysis of the forms of the 20th-century novel, and their relation to the forms of our political life and thought. Her essays on "goodness" combine psychological understanding, moral ambition, and eloquent prose. I continue to learn from her. She is a wonderful antidote to easy pessimism.

My second choice, rather to my surprise, turned out to be Lionel Trilling's *Beyond Culture*, first published in 1960. What I first gained from this book was a way of thinking about what "culture" was, a way which was subtle and not stifling. Trilling has a passionately ironic detachment from movements of thought which he diagnoses sympathetically and sharply. This collection of essays deals with the institutionalisation of rebellion, the creation of an orthodoxy of "subversion", the movement into the political structures of universities of forms of "modern" criticism of "society" which change their nature by becoming accepted beliefs. He is interested in the way in which we increasingly value the group before the individual. In his

essay, *Freud: Within and Beyond Culture*, he writes of Freud's emphasis on a biological residue of human quality which is resistant to cultural control. Like him, I find this idea liberating. We have lived through a time of ideological absolutes and he has proved a wily accurate and benign prophet.

My last choice had to be the thing itself, the work of art in words, and it was easy to choose the *Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens* (1955). Discovering Stevens, at the end of the Sixties, as a woman, was like first hearing the complicated rhythms of Shakespeare and Milton as a girl. Stevens, as a poet, has the quality Matisse has as a painter, the perfect arrangement of the elements of his medium into new, and surprising, and inevitable forms. I heard him before I read him, on a record, through a half-open door, intoning *The Idea of Order at Key West* which embodies our "rage for order" in light and sound and elemental water, primitive, passionate and intellectual. I go back and back to *Notes Towards a Supreme Fiction*, which combines weather with the gods, analysis with play, and scatters new-minted bright images across every page with inexhaustible largesse. All of us perhaps, have one or two phrases which we repeat to ourselves in time of difficulty, and one of mine is from *Notes*: "To discover an order as of/ A season, to discover summer and know it/ To discover winter and know it/ To discover nothing to have come on major weather/ It is possible, possible, possible. It must be/ Possible."

I think what all my three books have in common, also, is the patience to attempt to find, not to impose, the elegant scepticism, the fierce questioning, which is the antidote to ideology.



b. 1936

Antonia Fraser learnt passion from the pen of Margaret Mitchell

I read *The Last Days of Hitler* by Hugh Trevor-Roper shortly after it came out in 1947. At that point I was studying history and hoping to get into Oxford. Since I had been brought up to assume that history mysteriously came to a full stop in 1914 — leaving us to wander on aimlessly without actually contributing to it — I was surprised to read this dazzling study of events only a few years past. Subsequently, I read the updated version, since a lot of material was obviously still unknown in the late Forties. What struck me was the fact that the basic deductions of the trained historical mind were, give or take new evidence, still valid: while the lucidity and elegance of the style were an inspiration.

Twenty years later, struggling to write my first historical biography, *Mary Queen of Scots*, I was especially concerned about the problem of balance. Concentrate on the subject by all means, but what do you do about the background? I knew the principle of the thing. In an ideal biography, the reader should be painlessly educated about the period while never losing sight of the central figure. But how do you achieve that in practice? It's a problem, incidentally, that I've never found particularly easy to solve even with subsequent books. (When writing *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*, I was sorely tempted to deal with the complicated religious changes of the day with a single sentence: "And so the Reformation took place.") My good fortune then was to read Robert Blake's *Disraeli*, first published in 1966, which seemed to me then, and still seems, the model of political biography. Not only was the character of Disraeli vividly and sympathetically — but not uncritically — illuminated, but I also acquired an understanding of the 19th-century Tory party hitherto denied to me. Furthermore, I

understood for the first time how it was possible to be a Tory, emotionally — just as well, perhaps, since I was then married to a Tory MP.

My romantic education, as opposed to the other sort, was entirely derived from novels. It would be possible to list them in chronological order (as I read them) and thus to chart the various stages of my own sentimental journey. Rather than do that, which might take up more space in *The Times* than has been bargained for, I will simply cite the Mother of Them All: *Gone With the Wind* by Margaret Mitchell. This was first published in 1936, but of course, precocity can only go so far. In fact I first read it when I was 13 and in the middle of taking my School Certificate exam. I can still remember living in the dream of love and unhappiness which the book induced in me, and the look of the school library copy, pages badly crumpled and even tear-stained by those who had gone before me. I got very bad grades in my English exams (my actual set book was *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, poor stuff from my particular viewpoint) but I had at least majored in Passion.



b. 1932

● IN METRO ON SATURDAY: Books of the Year — plus Erica Wagner on Joe Gould's *Secret*, Michael Gove recommends the *Private Eye Annual 1997* and Jeffrey Archer reveals how he writes

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Christmas can be murder.

P.D. James
A Certain Justice

If you haven't a clue what to give, here's the answer.

ff
faber and faber

Leader entitled to sue his own council

Regina v Bassettlaw District Council, Ex parte Oddy
Before Lord Justice Hobhouse, Lord Justice Millett and Lord Justice Ockendon

[Judgment December 11]
Where the grant of planning permission was tainted by actual or apparent bias on the part of the councillors involved in the decision-making process, it was legitimate for the council, through its leader, to bring judicial review proceedings to have those planning decisions declared illegal and void, instead of revoking the decisions under section 97 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, thereby avoiding the need to pay compensation under section 107 of the Act.

The Court of Appeal so stated allowing an appeal by the applicant, Graham Anthony Nicholas Oddy, from the dismissal by Mr Justice Popplewell on December 11, 1996 of his application for judicial review of two planning decisions of Bassettlaw District Council dated February 21, 1994 and October 14, 1994, respectively.

On the appeal, the respondents were the interested third parties, Clarence and Frances Mabel Howcroft, who had been granted planning permission to develop for domestic housing two plots of agricultural land at Grange Farm, Ollerton Road, Retford, Nottinghamshire, owned by them.

The applicant was applying as the leader of the council and the chairman of its policy and resources committee which resolved to fund the application and not oppose it.

Mr David Mole, QC and Mr Paul Brown for the applicant; Mr Alan Alesbury for the Howcrofts.

LORD JUSTICE HOBHOUSE said that central to the matter was the question whether the Howcrofts should be paid compensation of about £2 million for the revocation of the planning consents under sections 97 and 100 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

If the council, through the applicant, succeeded in its appeal, the Howcrofts would not have to pay compensation under section 107.

In 1992, the Howcrofts made a joint venture agreement with Frank Coney which made him

their agent for the purpose of applying for and, if possible, obtaining the requisite planning consents for the residential development of Grange Farm. They gave him a substantial financial interest in the grant of those planning consents. A plan was attached showing the boundaries of the land which was divided into three plots: "Parrymore 1", "Parrymore 2" and "Southfields".

On September 22, 1993 the Parrymore 1 application was considered by the council's planning sub-committee with Councillor W. D. Hoare in the chair and despite the officers' recommendation that application should be refused, the sub-committee resolved to grant consent.

On October 11, 1993 the decision notice granting the Parrymore 1 consent was issued. The land was sold to a developer with the benefit of the planning consent for a substantial sum of money. The net proceeds were divided 75 per cent to the Howcrofts and 25 per cent to Mr Coney. Houses had since been built on the land.

On February 9, 1994 the application in respect of Parrymore 2 was considered by the sub-committee with Councillor Hoare in the chair and against the officers' recommendation the sub-committee resolved to grant consent. The decision notice granting the consent was issued on February 21, 1994. The Parrymore 2 land had not been sold to the Howcrofts and remained undeveloped.

In May 1994 Councillor Hoare ceased to be a member of the council and Councillor G. A. Crossland took over as chairman of the planning sub-committee.

On September 21 the Southfields application was considered with Councillor Crossland in the chair and against the advice of the officers, it was resolved to grant consent. The decision notice was issued on October 14, 1994. The Southfields land too had not been sold and remained undeveloped.

That sequence of events caused concern to other councillors and the responsible officers of the council. There had in 1989 been a disturbing incident involving a non-disclosed association between Mr Coney and Councillor Hoare in connection with a planning application.

Investigations revealed further contacts or associations between Mr Coney and members of the

council, particularly Councillors Hoare and Crossland, extending over the period with which the present proceedings were concerned.

Mr Justice Popplewell had granted leave to move for judicial review stating that it was of high public importance that the relevant allegations of impropriety in public life should be investigated.

The substantive application came before Mr Justice Popplewell the Howcrofts' case was that proceedings by way of judicial review were wholly inappropriate and that in any event the remedies asked for should not be granted.

The Howcrofts did not make any positive case on the merits. Instead they took three points: first, the locus standi of the applicant to make the application; second, the fact that the council had an alternative remedy under the 1990 Act to revoke the consents under section 97; and, third, delay.

Mr Justice Popplewell was not prepared to decide the first point in favour of the Howcrofts but as to the second and the third points, he decided that they were sufficient to justify him in refusing any remedy to the applicant regardless of the strength of his case on the merits about which he expressed no view.

The tenor of his judgment was that that of Mr Justice Buxton. He clearly considered that the type of allegations of misconduct in public life which he believed were being raised by the applicant should be dealt with in the context of civil proceedings, not by way of judicial review and that it was wrong in principle that judicial review proceedings should be used as a means of avoiding the need to pay compensation under the 1990 Act to the Howcrofts.

He considered that revocation of the consents under section 97 gave the council an adequate remedy. He also found that there had been undue delay. He accordingly refused relief.

Sufficient interest
Section 31 of the Supreme Court Act 1981 provides: "No application for judicial review shall be made unless... the applicant has a sufficient interest in the matter to which the application relates."

What amounted to a "sufficient interest" had been widely interpreted in recognition of the character and purpose of the procedure for obtaining judicial review.

The peculiarity of the present case was that the applicant, Mr Oddy, was in effect acting as a representative of the respondent, the council.

It was on the direction of the council that the applicant was bringing the proceedings. It was the decisions of the council that the applicant sought to have declared void.

It was possible to justify the making of the application by the applicant as an elector, and council taxpayer to the council. In the context of local government such a basis for establishing a sufficient interest had been recognised. However, such a justification would be artificial in the present case.

More germane was what was said by Mr Justice Nolan in *R v Port Talbot Borough Council, Ex parte Jones* (1988) 2 All ER 207, 215. That, like the present case, concerned allegedly unlawful conduct by a local authority.

Mr Justice Nolan had commented, again correctly in my view, that the leader of the council, the view being correctly taken that the council itself could hardly be both applicant and respondent, accepted, again correctly in my view, that the leader of the council has the necessary locus standi.

In his Lordship's judgment, that represented an acceptable approach. It was a convenient and appropriate course to adopt provided, of course, it was not abused. Such a role of the applicant was sufficient to meet the requirements of the statute and the rules at the stage of application for leave. At the stage of the decision whether or not to grant the remedy asked for, the substantive application for judicial review, the nature of the role of the applicant was one of the factors which could, and should, be taken into account in deciding whether to grant the remedy sought.

When exercising the discretion whether or not to grant the remedy, the court had to take into account that in substance, although not in form, it was the council which was seeking to have decisions of its own, through one of its own committees, declared void.

The questions of delay, alternative remedies and prejudice to interested third parties and the utility of the decision had to all be assessed with that factor in mind. Alternative remedies

The important feature of the power of revocation was that it might take into account circumstances arising since the original grant of consent.

The power of the local planning authority was granted in terms which were widely expressed. But it should only exercise the power to revoke under section 97 if it considered it expedient to exercise that power which carried with it a right to a person interested in the land to apply for compensation under section 107.

The council did not consider it expedient to revoke those consents because they were vitiated by bias or apparent bias and had made out what was necessary for him to establish on an application for judicial review of the decisions.

Exercise of discretion
In his Lordship's judgment, justice required that, as between the council and those whom the council represented on the one hand and the Howcrofts on the other, those consents should be declared void and that it would be unjust if the courts were to refuse to do so or were to require the council to pay compensation to the Howcrofts as a condition of achieving that result.

Lord Justice Millett and Lord Justice Ockendon agreed.
Solicitors: Sharpe Pritchard; Eversheds, Derby.

judgment that was a legitimate and proper attitude for the council to adopt.

Delay, the legal framework
It was necessary to consider what Lord Justice Simon Brown had said in *R v Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, Ex parte A* (1997) 3 WLR 776 about the relevance of delay at the time of the determination of the substantive application for judicial review and the exercise of the court's discretion.

The critical factor in the present case arose under Lord Justice Simon Brown's third head: hardship, prejudice and detriment to the interested third parties, the Howcrofts.

At present they had valuable development rights. If the consents were quashed they lost those rights subject to the possibility of applying for fresh new planning consents.

On the evidence, it had to be assumed that such applications would not have any realistic chance of success and his Lordship would proceed on that basis. Prejudice

The Howcrofts were both elderly. They had been negotiating to sell the Parrymore 2 and Southfields lands to a property developer for about £2 million. The proposed contract was conditional on existing planning permissions remaining in place and detailed planning permission being granted.

They submitted that they should be entitled to enjoy the benefits, as yet unrealised, of realising the development value of the land and they would lose that if the planning consents were invalidated.

That submission added nothing to the basic framework of the case. It was not just that the Howcrofts should not enjoy that benefit if they should not have received it in the first place. The merits

His Lordship would confine himself to the allegations of bias or apparent bias. It was not necessary to enter on any question of fraud. If the case had depended on the substantiation of allegations of fraud against individuals, it would have been appropriate that the council be required to pursue their claim by a writ action. Such issues were not normally suitable for judicial review proceedings.

But as to bias or apparent bias, that was properly the subject matter of proceedings for judicial review. It affected the propriety of the decision of the decision-maker.

In his Lordship's judgment, the applicant had presented a strong case in support of his application that the two relevant planning consents were rendered invalid by bias or apparent bias and had made out what was necessary for him to establish on an application for judicial review of the decisions.

Exercise of discretion
In his Lordship's judgment, justice required that, as between the council and those whom the council represented on the one hand and the Howcrofts on the other, those consents should be declared void and that it would be unjust if the courts were to refuse to do so or were to require the council to pay compensation to the Howcrofts as a condition of achieving that result.

Lord Justice Millett and Lord Justice Ockendon agreed.
Solicitors: Sharpe Pritchard; Eversheds, Derby.

Use of confidential business package

Murray v Yorkshire Fund Managers Ltd and Another
Before Lord Justice Nourse, Lord Justice Schiemann and Sir John Vinelott

[Judgment December 11]

In the absence of any contractual relationship, a plaintiff who co-owned a package of confidential information put together to facilitate a business project was powerless to prevent the information from being used after a decision taken by his co-owners to exclude him from participating in the project. The use of the information to the plaintiff's detriment could not be relied on by him to found an action for breach of confidence.

The Court of Appeal so held in reserved judgments allowing an appeal by the second defendant, Michael Edward Hartley, from Judge Marsham, QC, who sitting as a judge of the High Court in the Manchester Mercantile List on September 24, 1995, had given judgment for the plaintiff, Drummond Murray, against Mr Hartley for a sum to be assessed. The judge had dismissed the plaintiff's claim against the first defendant, Yorkshire Fund Managers Ltd.

Mr David Walkman for Mr Hartley; Mr T. E. Shauman for Mr Murray; Mr Steven Coles for Yorkshire Fund Managers Ltd.

LORD JUSTICE NOURSE said that in 1991 a business plan and information regarding the purchase of a company, Servicescope Electronics Ltd, put together by a team of persons that included Mr Murray, was highly confidential information.

Mr Murray and the other five members of the team each had equal rights in the information. There was no contractual, fiduciary or other special relationship between them.

The information was subsequently communicated by the Servicescope team to Mr Hartley, an investment manager.

and his employer, Yorkshire Fund Managers Ltd.

Thereafter Mr Hartley, with the consent of the members of the team other than Mr Murray, had started using the information for his own benefit and for a purpose detrimental to Mr Murray.

The question was whether Mr Murray, not having agreed to the proposal and thus not having consented to Mr Hartley's use of the information, was entitled to relief against Mr Hartley.

Three elements were required, apart from contract, for an action for breach of confidence to succeed: first, the information had to have the necessary quality of confidence; second, the information had to have been imparted in circumstances importing an obligation of confidence; and third, the information had to have been used in a way that was detrimental to the plaintiff.

There could be no doubt that the first two elements were present. Everything depended on whether there had been an unauthorised use of the information.

In *Mathers v Green* (1865) 1 Ch App 39, a decision approved by the House of Lords in *Steers v Rogers* (1893) AC 232, it was held that one joint patentee of a patent was unable to control its use by the other patentee.

In *Hog-Diav v Edmunds* (1891) 81 LT 579 a similar principle was applied to a secret process, it being held that one co-owner could not, in the absence of contract, restrain the other from using it for his own benefit.

On the basis of those authorities Mr Walkman submitted that each member of the team, being himself entitled, as against the others, to use the confidential information for his own benefit, was equally entitled to consent to Mr Hartley using it for his benefit in the way that he had.

While Mr Walkman's submissions represented a correct application of the reasoning in *Hog-Diav*, a decision in the instant

case was not to rest on that case alone. At the turn of the century the law relating to breach of confidence was not as well developed as it had since become.

It was necessary to consider the particular relationship between the parties with care. The members of the team had together acquired the assets of Servicescope through the medium of a new company.

Although there might have been agreement as to the sums to be invested, with much remaining to be agreed there could never have been a binding agreement that all the members would continue to participate and any of them could have withdrawn.

Equally the members other than Mr Murray had been at liberty to decide among themselves that they would go ahead without him, either on their own or with others. That is what they did and, however, increased Mr Murray might have been at their conduct and that of Mr Hartley, he had been powerless to prevent it.

It was in that context that the confidential information had to be considered. It came into being for the purpose of facilitating the project.

Initially it belonged to all the members of the team. But if one of their number could be excluded from the project, he could not, after his exclusion, prevent the others from using the information as they pleased.

To put it another way, the information, being an adjunct of a relationship which was incapable of prolonging, ceased to be his property once the relationship was dissolved.

On that ground the question of law should be decided in favour of Mr Hartley.

LORD JUSTICE SCHIEMANN gave a concurring judgment and Sir John Vinelott agreed.

Solicitors: Eversheds, Leeds; Mainman Heywood, Manchester; Davies Arnold & Cooper.

Video disclosure not unlawful

Regina v Brentwood Borough Council, Ex parte Peck
A local authority did not act unlawfully in giving to the media copies of a closed circuit television recording made in a public place.

Mr Justice Harrison so held in the Queen's Bench Division on November 25 when dismissing an application for judicial review by Geoffrey Dennis Peck of disclosure of video recordings made by Brentwood Borough Council.

The applicant had tried to commit suicide by cutting his wrists with a knife. Unknown to him his actions were video recorded. The police released him without charge.

Subsequently the council distributed copies of the incident to the media. The footage showed the applicant walking along High Street, Brentwood with a knife but did not show him cutting his wrists. He was recognised by friends and neighbours when it was shown on television and depicted in a local paper.

MR JUSTICE HARRISON said that section 163 of the Criminal

Justice and Public Order Act 1994 and section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 empowered the council to provide and operate closed circuit television to promote the prevention of crime. It was also empowered to distribute video recordings thus made to the media because that thereby facilitated the

promotion of the prevention of crime.

While his Lordship had sympathy with the applicant, the council had not acted irrationally as it had not known of his complaint until the footage had been featured on television and in a local paper.

Auditors' duty

Conlithard and Others v Neville Russell (a Firm)

It was arguable that where a firm appointed as a company's accountants and acting as its auditors was in a position to advise its directors that making loan payments to a shell company which had acquired the company's issued share capital to enable it to meet its financial commitments incurred by the purchase of the shares, rather than making dividend payments, would involve infringement of section 151 of the Companies Act 1985 then that firm owed a duty of care at common law to give such advice to

the directors of the company.

The Court of Appeal (Lord Justice Kennedy, Lord Justice Chadwick so stated on November 27 when dismissing an appeal by Neville Russell, a firm of accountants, against the refusal of Judge Mann J to grant an injunction, as a judge of the High Court in the Queen's Bench Division, to strike out the statement of claim and dismiss the action brought against the firm by David Conlithard, Hugh Shuttleworth and Alan Dawes, directors of a company carrying on business as a members' agent for names at Lloyd's.

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| Full back | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Full back | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Central defender | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Central defender | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Midfielder | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Midfielder | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Midfielder | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Midfielder | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Striker | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Striker | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Manager | | | | | | | | | | | | |

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| 32801 | S McCulloch | St. Johnstone | 0.50 |
| 32801 | S Campbell | Tottenham Hotspur | 2.50 |
| 32802 | J Scobie | Tottenham Hotspur | 2.50 |
| 32803 | R Vega | Tottenham Hotspur | 2.50 |
| 32804 | C Greenwood | Tottenham Hotspur | 2.50 |
| 32801 | R Ferdinand | West Ham United | 2.50 |
| 32902 | R Hall | West Ham United | 2.00 |
| 31403 | D Unsworth | West Ham United | 1.50 |
| 32903 | S Potts | West Ham United | 2.00 |
| 32904 | P Perry | West Ham United | 2.00 |
| 33001 | J Pearce | Widnesdon | 2.50 |
| 33002 | D Blackwell | Widnesdon | 2.50 |

| Code | Name | Team | Price \$m |
|-------|------------|------------------|-----------|
| 40101 | E Jones | Abardon | 2.00 |
| 40102 | P Bernard | Abardon | 2.00 |
| 40201 | M Owensara | Arsenal | 5.50 |
| 40202 | P Velm | Arsenal | 3.50 |
| 40203 | S Hughes | Arsenal | 2.00 |
| 40204 | R Perhou | Arsenal | 2.50 |
| 40205 | D Pien | Arsenal | 1.50 |
| 40301 | M Draper | Aston Villa | 3.00 |
| 40302 | I Taylor | Aston Villa | 2.50 |
| 40401 | N Broom | Barnsley | 3.00 |
| 40402 | E Thaker | Barnsley | 2.00 |
| 40403 | D Sheridan | Barnsley | 1.00 |
| 40404 | M Bullock | Barnsley | 0.50 |
| 40501 | J Wilson | Blackburn Rovers | 3.00 |
| 40502 | B McKinley | Blackburn Rovers | 3.00 |

| | | | |
|-------|-----------------|--------------------|------|
| 40501 | A Thompson | Bolton Wanderers | 2.50 |
| 40502 | S Sainsbury | Bolton Wanderers | 2.00 |
| 40503 | P Franciosi | Bolton Wanderers | 2.00 |
| 40504 | M Johansen | Bolton Wanderers | 2.00 |
| 40505 | J Sedick | Bolton Wanderers | 2.00 |
| 40506 | A1 Thom | Celtic | 4.50 |
| 40762 | P O'Donnell | Celtic | 3.00 |
| 40763 | S Bligh | Celtic | 3.00 |
| 40764 | C Burley | Celtic | 3.00 |
| 40765 | P Lambert | Celtic | 3.00 |
| 40801 | D1 Mamberi | Celtic United | 3.00 |
| 40802 | R DI Martello | Chelsea | 3.50 |
| 40803 | N Newman | Chelsea | 1.50 |
| 40804 | G Poyett | Chelsea | 3.00 |
| 40901 | G McAllister | Coventry City | 2.50 |
| 40902 | T Sclater | Coventry City | 2.00 |
| 40903 | J Sallu | Coventry City | 2.00 |
| 40904 | F Taffar | Coventry City | 1.50 |
| 41002 | S Rodgers | Crystal Palace | 1.00 |
| 41003 | D Pitcher | Crystal Palace | 0.25 |
| 41004 | P Churchill | Crystal Palace | 1.00 |
| 41005 | A Lombardo | Crystal Palace | 1.00 |
| 41101 | A Asanovici | Derby County | 2.50 |
| 41102 | R Emsie | Derby County | 1.00 |
| 41103 | D Powell | Derby County | 1.50 |
| 41104 | C Hasty | Derby County | 1.50 |
| 41105 | N O'Neil Luan | Derby County | 1.00 |
| 41106 | J Dallard | Derby County | 1.00 |
| 41201 | R Writers | Dundee United | 3.50 |
| 41201 | J Smith | Dundee United | 3.00 |
| 41301 | G Speed | Everton | 3.50 |
| 41402 | J Pennington | Everton | 4.50 |
| 41403 | G Farrelly | Everton | 1.00 |
| 41404 | D Williamson | Everton | 2.50 |
| 41405 | J Ocker | Everton | 2.50 |
| 41501 | N McCann | Hearts | 3.50 |
| 41601 | C Jackson | Hibernian | 2.00 |
| 41602 | L Lewis | Hibernian | 2.00 |
| 41701 | J McIndrye | Kilmarnock | 2.00 |
| 41801 | D1 McIndrye | Leeds United | 2.00 |
| 41802 | L Bowyer | Leeds United | 2.00 |
| 41802 | A Hamland | Leeds United | 2.00 |
| 41803 | R Shute | Leeds United | 2.50 |
| 41804 | B Ribeiro | Leeds United | 2.50 |
| 41901 | G Parker | Leeds United | 2.00 |
| 41902 | N Lennock | Leeds City | 1.50 |
| 41903 | M Izzi | Leeds City | 2.00 |
| 41904 | S Taylor | Leeds City | 1.50 |
| 42001 | S McMannaman | Liverpool | 4.00 |
| 42002 | D LeonardHansen | Liverpool | 4.00 |
| 42013 | T Thomas | Liverpool | 4.00 |
| 42014 | J Rednapp | Liverpool | 4.00 |
| 42036 | F Finch | Manchester United | 8.00 |
| 42101 | N Beetham | Manchester United | 4.00 |
| 42102 | R Giggis | Manchester United | 4.00 |
| 42103 | N Kewell | Manchester United | 4.00 |
| 42104 | N Butti | Manchester United | 4.00 |
| 42105 | A Cole | Manchester United | 4.00 |
| 42201 | N Davies | Motherwell | 5.00 |
| 42301 | R Lee | Newcastle United | 5.00 |
| 42302 | K Gillespie | Newcastle United | 3.50 |
| 42303 | B Barry | Newcastle United | 3.50 |
| 42305 | J Barnes | Newcastle United | 3.50 |
| 42401 | B Latham | Rangers | 6.00 |
| 42402 | R Gascoigne | Rangers | 6.00 |
| 42403 | J Broad | Rangers | 3.00 |
| 42404 | J Alberty | Sheffeld Wednesday | 3.00 |
| 42501 | N Carbone | Sheffeld Wednesday | 2.00 |
| 42701 | J Magilton | Sheffeld Wednesday | 2.00 |
| 42802 | M McEderidge | Sheffeld Wednesday | 1.00 |
| 42904 | H Hyde | Sheffeld Wednesday | 1.00 |
| 42905 | G Whittingham | Sheffeld Wednesday | 1.50 |
| 42702 | R Knapton | Southampton | 0.75 |
| 42703 | K Richardson | Southampton | 0.50 |
| 42705 | C Palmer | Southampton | 0.50 |
| 42708 | M Osaka | Southampton | 1.50 |
| 42801 | A SakerHoglu | St. John's one | 0.75 |
| 42801 | A Sinton | Tottenham Hotspur | 2.00 |
| 42802 | D Anderson | Tottenham Hotspur | 2.00 |
| 42803 | R Fyfe | Tottenham Hotspur | 2.00 |
| 42804 | D Howells | Tottenham Hotspur | 2.00 |
| 42805 | D Gmola | Tottenham Hotspur | 2.50 |
| 42801 | E Barker | West Ham United | 2.50 |
| 42802 | S Lomas | West Ham United | 2.50 |
| 42903 | J Moncur | West Ham United | 2.00 |
| 43001 | R Campbell | West Ham United | 4.00 |
| 43002 | N Ardley | West Ham United | 2.00 |

| STRIKERS | | | |
|----------|-------------|------------------|----------|
| Code | Name | Team | Price £m |
| 50101 | S Dadds | Aberdeen | 4.00 |
| 50201 | I Wright | Arsenal | 7.50 |
| 50202 | D Bingham | Arsenal | 8.50 |
| 50301 | D Yorke | Aston Villa | 6.00 |
| 50302 | S Collimore | Aston Villa | 5.00 |
| 50303 | S Milosevic | Aston Villa | 3.00 |
| 50401 | G Helder | Barnsley | 1.50 |
| 50402 | J Hendrie | Barnsley | 1.00 |
| 51102 | A Ward | Barnsley | 2.00 |
| 54002 | C Meeble | Barnsley | 1.00 |
| 51101 | K Gallacher | Blackburn Rovers | 5.50 |
| 50502 | M Dahlin | Blackburn Rovers | 4.00 |

| | | | |
|--------|---------------|---------------------|-------|
| 506003 | P Beardsley | Bolton Wanderers | 2.00 |
| 506003 | P Holdstock | Bolton Wanderers | 2.00 |
| 51601 | D Jackson | Celtic | 0.00 |
| 50703 | T Johnson | Celtic | 0.00 |
| 50704 | S Donnelly | Celtic | 0.00 |
| 50795 | H Larsson | Celtic | 0.00 |
| 50801 | G Zola | Chelsea | 0.00 |
| 50802 | M Hughes | Chelsea | 0.00 |
| 50801 | D Dublin | Coventry City | 5.00 |
| 50802 | D Huckerby | Covenry City | 5.00 |
| 50803 | N Whelan | Covenry City | 5.00 |
| 51001 | N Shipperley | Crystal Palace | 2.00 |
| 51003 | B Dyer | Crystal Palace | 2.00 |
| 51004 | M Padoyano | Crystal Palace | 2.00 |
| 51101 | D Sturridge | Derby County | 3.00 |
| 51103 | P Balano | Derby County | 3.00 |
| 51104 | D Burton | Derby County | 3.00 |
| 51105 | P Wanchopu | Derby County | 3.50 |
| 51201 | A McLaren | Durdee United | 2.00 |
| 51202 | A Ochocka | Durdee United | 2.00 |
| 51301 | G Britton | Durdermane | 2.00 |
| 51401 | D Ferguson | Evanton | 2.00 |
| 51402 | B Barmby | Evanton | 2.00 |
| 51404 | D Cadamarteri | Evanton | 2.00 |
| 51501 | J Robertson | Hearts | 3.00 |
| 51602 | R Hamill | Hearts | 3.00 |
| 51622 | S Crawford | Hibernian | 3.00 |
| 51701 | P Wright | Kilmarnock | 3.00 |
| 51702 | J Mitchell | Kilmarnock | 3.00 |
| 51801 | J Hestebaink | Leeds United | 2.50 |
| 51802 | R Wallace | Leeds United | 2.50 |
| 51804 | M Keuell | Leeds United | 2.00 |
| 51801 | S Charlge | Leeds City | 2.00 |
| 51802 | Hanks | Leeds City | 2.00 |
| 51903 | I Marshall | Liverpool | 2.50 |
| 51904 | G Featon | Liverpool City | 2.00 |
| 52001 | T Fowler | Liverpool | 2.00 |
| 52002 | P Barger | Liverpool | 3.00 |
| 52003 | K Reddie | Liverpool | 4.00 |
| 52004 | H Oweis | Liverpool | 4.00 |
| 52101 | O Shokhman | Manchester United | 7.50 |
| 52102 | T Sherkgiam | Manchester United | 7.50 |
| 52103 | Schoch | Manchester United | 7.50 |
| 52201 | A Coyte | Motherwell | 3.00 |
| 52202 | Cryan | Motherwell | 3.00 |
| 52301 | A Shearer | Newcastle United | 10.00 |
| 52303 | F Asprille | Newcastle United | 2.00 |
| 52304 | J Tomkinson | Newcastle United | 2.00 |
| 52402 | M Negri | Rangers | 8.00 |
| 52408 | S Rowatell | Rangers | 8.00 |
| 52409 | R Durie | Rangers | 8.00 |
| 52501 | A Booth | Sheffield Wednesday | 3.00 |
| 50702 | P De Caster | Sheffield Wednesday | 3.00 |
| 52503 | R Hampson | Sheffield Wednesday | 3.00 |
| 52701 | MI Lane | Southampton | 7.00 |
| 52802 | D Hirst | Southampton | 7.00 |
| 52702 | G Osterland | Southampton | 7.00 |
| 52704 | K Davies | Southampton | 3.00 |
| 52801 | G O'Boyle | St Johnstone | 1.50 |
| 52802 | G Grant | St Johnstone | 1.50 |
| 52801 | S Iversen | Tottenham Hotspur | 3.50 |
| 52802 | L Ferdinand | Tottenham Hotspur | 3.50 |
| 52802 | E Armstrong | Tottenham Hotspur | 3.50 |
| 52803 | J Domingues | Tottenham Hotspur | 3.00 |
| 52901 | J Hartson | West Ham United | 4.50 |
| 52902 | K Isaac | West Ham United | 4.50 |
| 52903 | I Dorrice | West Ham United | 4.50 |
| 53001 | M Gay | Wimbledon | 4.00 |
| 53002 | E Blackie | Wimbledon | 4.00 |
| 53004 | C Coy | Wimbledon | 2.00 |

| Code | Name | Team | Price £m |
|-------|--------------|---------------------|----------|
| 60102 | A Miller | Aberdeen | 1.50 |
| 60201 | A Wegerer | Arsenal | 5.00 |
| 60301 | B Little | Aston Villa | 2.50 |
| 60401 | D Wilson | Barnley | 0.50 |
| 60501 | P Hodgson | Blackburn Rovers | 3.50 |
| 60601 | C Todd | Bolton Wanderers | 1.50 |
| 60701 | W Jensen | Celtic | 4.00 |
| 60801 | R Gullit | Chelsea | 2.50 |
| 60901 | G Strachan | Gowerney City | 1.00 |
| 61001 | S Coppell | Oxford Palace | 0.75 |
| 61101 | J Smith | Derby County | 1.50 |
| 61201 | T McLean | Dundee United | 2.00 |
| 61301 | B Baden | Durhamstad | 2.00 |
| 61401 | H Kendall | Everton | 2.00 |
| 61501 | J Jefferson | Hearts | 3.50 |
| 61601 | J Duffy | Hibernian | 2.00 |
| 61701 | B Williamson | Kilmarnock | 1.50 |
| 61801 | G Graham | Leds United | 3.00 |
| 61901 | M O'Neil | Lancashire City | 1.00 |
| 62001 | R Evans | Liverpool | 3.00 |
| 62101 | A Ferguson | Manchester United | 3.00 |
| 62201 | A McEneaney | Merthyrall | 1.00 |
| 62301 | K Dalglish | Newcastle United | 4.00 |
| 62401 | W Smith | Rangers | 3.00 |
| 62501 | R Adams | Sheffiled Wednesday | 0.50 |
| 62701 | D Jones | Southampton | 0.50 |
| 62801 | P Sturrock | St Johnstone | 0.60 |
| 62901 | C Gross | Tottenham Hotspur | 2.00 |
| 63001 | H Redknapp | West Ham United | 2.00 |
| 63101 | J Kilmear | Wimbledon | 2.00 |

SAILING

Cayard in front by a nose as fleet nears turn

By Edward Gorman, Sailing Correspondent

IT IS not often that a professional yacht racing skipper refers to his boat as a horse, but then Paul Cayard, at the wheel of *EF Language*, has never failed to impress with his imaginative and lucid interpretation of situations during his first Whitbread Round the World Race.

The Californian was in good spirits yesterday as *EF Language* again popped out at the head of the nine-boat fleet on the difficult third leg from Fremantle to Sydney, one characterised by windward sailing and weather maps dominated by high pressure.

"We are into miles-at-the-barn mode," Cayard, who was enjoying a 12-mile lead over Gunnar Krantz, in *Swedish Match*, in second place, said. "This horse can smell the barn and it's hoofin' as fast as it can."

EF Language was making ten knots in 14 knots of breeze from the south and heading straight for Cape Oway at the western entrance to the Bass Strait, 600 miles ahead.

Cayard and Krantz have benefited from steering a middle-of-the-fleet course during the past two days. The field is still spread out over a north-south axis of 175 miles.

Lawrie Smith, on *Silk Cut*, is furthest north, with *Cheslie*

Racing, *Toshiba*, *Merit Cup* and *EF Education* below him. To the south of Cayard, *Innovation*, *Kvaerner* and *Brunel-Sunergy*, which have taken what most of the other skipper regard as a flyer. *Kvaerner* improved her position from last to sixth yesterday, but may have stalled slightly.

Cayard predicts the decisive phase may be when the fleet turns north after passing through the Strait. "Really, things are very close and considering the spread of the fleet... the weather will make all the difference. If nothing major happens, we will all arrive at Bass Strait in a tight pack and save the excitement for the beat up the east coast of Oz," he said.

Grant Dalton is continuing to feel the heat with *Merit Cup*, lying further north, but still down the pack in seventh position. "We are doing a lot of worrying. I can assure you," Dalton said. "There is a big split in the fleet — north and south — and two very separate feelings on how best to get there [the Strait]. Only one thing is sure — some boats will be very wrong, but it may take another 36 hours before it properly unfolds."

"We have decided to travel over the top of the high pressure that is pushing into the Bight, on the basis that the south should eventually run out of wind and the only wind in town will be in the north?"

The question mark at the end of that sentence in Dalton's e-mail communication was his own, perhaps an indication of just how anxious the Aucklanders and Mike Quilter, the navigator, must be feeling, knowing that their decisions could determine whether *Merit Cup* will still be in the running for overall honours at the end of this leg.

Latest positions, page 45



Cayard: in good spirits

Women thrive in league of their own

SARAH POTTER



Rugby league, perhaps the most masculine of sports, is undergoing another facelift. No sooner has the Super League substituted winter mud for summer razzmatazz than Jackie Sheldon is spreading the news that women can play too.

The British Amateur Rugby League Association (Barla) agrees and has appointed Sheldon, 35, as the first women's national development officer. This new post, funded by the Sports Council, will run for 12 months. "The job has a wide remit," Sheldon said. "I want to get a proper structure in place for women to play, coach and run their own game."

That women play at all may come as a surprise to anyone living south of the Pennines. According to Sheldon, there are about 500 women playing rugby league, all in the north of England at present. The Women's Rugby League Association was formed in 1986 and there are two divisions in its national league. A Great Britain squad was first assembled in 1995. Sheldon herself played up until this year and is now the most qualified coach in the women's game.

She hopes that the interest generated by teams such as the London Broncos will help to shift the appeal of the game southwards. There was a women's club in Fulham during the late Eighties. "They were often short of players and used to travel hundreds of miles in their van every week to play," Sheldon said. "I remember hearing that they picked up a hitch-hiker once, on condition that she played in the game!"

While working as a co-ordinator for the Action Sport



Sheldon is hoping to find new converts to the cause of rugby league among women in the south of England

project in Featherstone in 1988, Sheldon had no shortage of volunteers wanting to try the sport. "I can remember that first session. It was bitterly cold, the first Friday night after Christmas. We weren't allowed on the pitch, in case we churned it up too much, so we just ran around on the side. But we had 19 women turn up and from that we formed two teams, Redhill and Wakefield Panthers."

Featherstone, Sheldon's home town, is in the heartland of rugby league. Her two brothers are similarly passionate about the game and she remembers the girls playing at her school. "I can recall when Featherstone got to Wembley and what it felt like for the town," she said. "It's very much a traditional stronghold and, when the team went round in their bus

after being at Wembley, everyone came out to cheer."

She regrets that, in the new look men's game, some of the smaller clubs, such as Featherstone Rovers, are getting weaker while the big ones, such as Bradford Bulls, are getting stronger. "You can't make the same assumptions any more," she said. "The clubs need to put something back into the local community and the ones that are doing that are reaping the benefit."

Wakefield Panthers are the dominant force in the women's game. Unbeaten in seven years, they have a growing reputation and support. Sheldon, who bears a striking resemblance to the singer Debbie Harry, of Blondie, does not look big enough or mean enough to have played as a second-row forward. She

is certain, though, that women have more than enough skill and power to play an entertaining game.

The Australians seem to agree. In August 1996, after Britain players had raised the necessary £70,000, Sheldon and her team-mates went on a tour that included three international matches and took in Sydney, Canberra and Brisbane.

"It was an amazing achievement just to get there," she said. "To win the series 2-1 was absolutely fantastic. We had loads of publicity, even the taxi drivers recognised us. The tour was very tough and although we were all ready to come home, when we landed in England we felt very flat. There was just no interest."

Sheldon now believes that was a defining moment for

the women's game. "From that trip, we realised we had potential and that we had to make our own future. We decided we wanted to improve our playing standard and our structure. We have some very talented, valuable people in our sport and I want them to stay involved."

Barla has now signalled its support and Sheldon believes it is time to make the sport more visible. "What I'd really like is for the women to play at Wembley. A few years ago, we played before the Premiership final in front of thousands. The GB women were invited to Wembley for the Challenge Cup final this year, but we were only allowed to dance round the pitch waving flags. It was nice to be at Wembley, but we should have been playing. I hope that day is not too far away."

SQUASH

Marshall ready for life at the top

By Colin McQuillan

PETER MARSHALL'S defeat of Simon Parke in the NSL Cup first-round game at Edgbaston Priory late on Monday evening is certain to return the double-handed to the position of England No 1. It would be the first time that Marshall, 26, has led the national rankings since he was forced out of the game with chronic fatigue syndrome in April, 1995.

The former world No 2 defeated Parke, 25, the first-string for ICL LionHerts, the Super League champions, 10-8, 9-4, 10-8 in an hour-long encounter. For a time, the victory seemed to offer Armourcolor Priory, Marshall's National Squash League side, a chance of reaching the quarter-finals of the cup — which is played annually between the two leading leagues in Great Britain — but lower-order victories by Mark Chaloner, who beat Clive Leach 8-10, 9-7, 9-5, 9-7, and Julian Wellings, who defeated Simon Taylor 4-9, 5-9, 9-7, 9-5, 9-7, ensured that LionHerts went through.

Tamworth Duffield, also of the National League, beat Rowlands Manchester, of the Super League, the team that swept all before them in the cup last season, 2-1 on their village courts in Derbyshire. Nick Taylor won at first string for the cup-holders, but Paul Hargrave and John Russell carried the lower order for Duffield.

Halifax Insurance, who are expected to introduce Jansher Khan, of Pakistan, into Super League action from January, defeated Hallamshire 2-1, while Surbiton carried the day for the Super League 3-0 against Bishop's Stortford and Ellis Lingfield defeated Harncliffe Chichester 2-1.

In Wales, Dunraven Maesteg beat Cardiff Institute 3-0. In a comprehensive display of developing Welsh strength in squash, Alex Gough, defeated Matthew Benjamin 9-3, 9-7, 7-9, 9-4, David Evans, the Welsh champion, overcame Greg Tipping 9-6, 9-6, 9-4 and Adrian Davies, the former Wales captain, defeated Paul Allen 9-7, 10-8, 2-9, 9-4.

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TOWCESTER

SHEEHAN on BRIDGE

By Robert Sheehan, Bridge Correspondent

The suit combination in which there is most scope for delicate play is where the declarer has nine cards missing just the queen. Here is another variation on the theme.

| Dealer East | N-S game and 60 | Rubber bridge |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| ♠ 8 ♥ Q84 ♦ K109853 ♣ QJ5 | ♠ 864 ♥ AKJ3 ♦ AQ ♣ K874 | ♠ A753 ♥ 9 ♦ J87 ♣ A10863 |
| | ♠ KQJ102 ♥ 107852 ♦ A2 ♣ 2 | |

Contract: Four Spades doubled, by South. Lead: Ten of diamonds

After two passes, West opened Three Diamonds. North doubled and East bid Four Diamonds. I was South, and bid Four Spades. That went back to East, who doubled. I had just lost successively a 22-point and a 32-point rubber in the TGR £100 game, and I threw away another £1,000 on this hand. The queen of diamonds held the first trick and I played a spade to the king. Now how should I continue?

East was Robert Richman, who played for Australia in the recent Bermuda Bowl. Obviously, if I continued with another high spade, he would duck; was there any better play than continuing trumps?

In practice, I did play a second high trump, ducked again by East. He took the third round and returned a diamond. Now I was stuck in dummy, and to avoid losing control had to play ace and king of hearts: when East ruffed the second round, I was one off.

There is a clear safety play on this hand. After one round

of trumps, I should have played a heart to the king. Now I play a second spade. East's best play is to duck (else I have communication to draw trumps before racking the hearts), and now I play a second heart, finessing the jack when West follows small.

The beauty of this play is that, whether East ruffs or wins with the queen, hearts are set up.

The difference from my line of play is that I lose only one heart trick (obviously West cannot have the ace of clubs after East's double, so there is no danger of losing two heart ruffs). Playing as I did at the table, I managed to lose both a ruff and a heart trick. Annoying — I wrote about this type of play a few months ago.

□ The Macallan International Bridge Pairs Championship 1998 will be played at The White House Hotel, Albany Street, London NW1 from Wednesday January 21 to Friday January 23. Tickets and information are available from the Macallan Box Office, 31 Queens Road, Mortlake, London SW14 8PH. Tel: 0181-878 5844.

KEENE on CHESS

By Raymond Keene, Chess Correspondent

Favourite's progress

Viswanathan Anand, the Indian grandmaster, is the highest rated player in the Fide world championship. His rating of 2,765 exceeds even that of Anatoly Karpov (2,745) who has already qualified for the final. So far, during his campaign to dethrone Karpov, Anand has eliminated both Predrag Nikolic and Alexander Khalifman.

White: Viswanathan Anand
Black: Predrag Nikolic
Fide world championship
Groningen, December 1997

| French Defence | |
|----------------|-------|
| 1 e4 | e6 |
| 2 d4 | d5 |
| 3 Nc3 | Bb4 |
| 4 e5 | c5 |
| 5 a3 | Bxc3+ |
| 6 bxc3 | Qa5 |
| 7 Bc2 | Qa4 |
| 8 Qg4 | g6 |
| 9 Qd1 | cxg4 |
| 10 Rb1 | c3 |
| 11 Bxc3 | Qxc3 |
| 12 Nf3 | Qc5 |
| 13 f4 | h6 |
| 14 0-0 | Nd7 |
| 15 Re1 | a6 |
| 16 Bc4 | cxg4 |
| 17 Bc4 | c3 |
| 18 Bc3 | Qc4 |
| 19 Bc4 | Nc5 |
| 20 Re3 | Nxe4 |
| 21 Rb4 | Bd7 |
| 22 Re3 | Nef7 |
| 23 Re3 | Qd6 |
| 24 Re5 | Qe4 |
| 25 Re7 | b5 |
| 26 Bc5 | Nd5 |
| 27 Rb7 | Kxd7 |
| 28 Rb4 | Qd4 |
| 29 Bb4 | Rfc8 |
| 30 Bc5 | Rc4 |
| 31 Nd2 | Rd4 |
| 32 c3 | Rd3 |
| 33 c4 | Rxc2 |
| 34 Qxd2 | bxc4 |
| 35 Qxd8 | |

Black resigns

White: Alexander Khalifman
Black: Viswanathan Anand
Fide world championship
Groningen, December 1997

| Bogo-Indian Defence | |
|---------------------|-------|
| 1 d4 | Nf6 |
| 2 Nf3 | e6 |
| 3 c4 | Bb4+ |
| 4 Nbd2 | 0-0 |
| 5 a3 | Bxd2+ |
| 6 Bxd2 | b6 |
| 7 Bg5 | Bb7 |
| 8 e3 | d6 |
| 9 Bc3 | Nbd7 |
| 10 0-0 | h6 |
| 11 Bc4 | c5 |
| 12 Bg5 | d5 |
| 13 cxd5 | exd5 |
| 14 cxd5 | bxc5 |
| 15 b4 | Nc4 |
| 16 Rc1 | Nag3 |
| 17 hmg3 | c4 |
| 18 Bf5 | Nf6 |
| 19 Qd4 | Qb6 |
| 20 Rf1 | Bc8 |
| 21 Bb1 | Bg4 |
| 22 e4 | Rf8 |
| 23 Qc6 | axb6 |
| 24 exd5 | b5 |
| 25 Rc3 | Rcd8 |
| 26 Re3 | Rc3 |
| 27 Re3 | Ra8 |
| 28 e4 | Ra3 |
| 29 e5 | Nd7 |
| 30 e6 | h6 |
| 31 dxe6 | Bxe6 |
| 32 Nc4 | Bg4 |
| 33 Nxb5 | Rb3 |
| 34 Rc1 | Rxb4 |
| 35 Bc2 | Nb6 |
| 36 Nc3 | Bc6 |
| 37 Rb1 | Rbb1+ |
| 38 Bxb1 | Nd5 |
| 39 Nxc5 | Bxc5 |
| 40 Kf2 | Kf7 |
| 41 Kc3 | Bxc2 |
| 42 Kd4 | Bf1 |
| 43 Be4 | f6 |
| 44 Bf3 | Kf5 |
| 45 Bd1 | Kg5 |
| 46 Bf3 | h5 |

White resigns

□ Raymond Keene writes on chess Monday to Friday in Sport and in the Weekend section on Saturday.

WORD-WATCHING

By Philip Howard

HYGRIC

- a. A mythical beast
- b. To do with water
- c. A lost language

MANDAT

- a. Revolutionary money
- b. The Jersey Parliament
- c. "Let Justice be Done!"

NANDI

- a. A bull
- b. Unleavened bread
- c. An effeminate man

HOICK

- a. A country bumpkin
- b. An Amerindian language
- c. A cricket shot

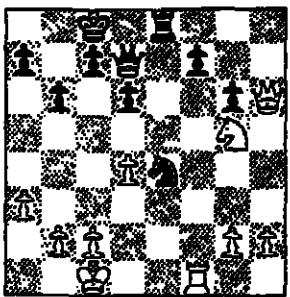
Answers on page 45

WINNING MOVE

By Raymond Keene

Black to play. This position is from Mortensen — Krasenkov, Hastings, 1992. Material is level, but Black has the better chances as his pieces are more centralised. He now found a way to exploit the disjointed nature of the white forces. What did he play?

Solution on page 45



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FOOTBALL

Northampton earn lucrative derby from cup victory

By OUR SPORTS STAFF

IAN ATKINS, the manager of Northampton Town, was able to look forward to an FA Cup third-round game against Leicester City yesterday after his side survived a penalty shoot-out at Basingstoke Town in a hard-fought second-round replay on Tuesday night.

The Ryman League hosts held the Nationwide League second division side to 0-0 after 120 minutes, but then missed twice from the penalty spot.

"Leicester in the next round is great for the players, but also financially for the club — it's a terrific draw," Atkins said.

Carl Higgs scored the winning penalty in the 4-3 shoot-out, but said: "Full credit to Basingstoke. They were terrible conditions, but we stuck to our task and thankfully we came through." Ernie Howe, the Basingstoke manager,

said: "We are disappointed, but that's the luck of penalty shoot-outs. I'm proud of my players, who showed what a good all-round outfit they are. We have got stronger in each of the games we've played against league opposition and proved a match for them."

Chesterfield, who reached the FA Cup semi-finals last season, made an early exit this time with a 2-0 home defeat against Grimsby Town in their second-round replay. A goal from Jack Lester in the 22nd minute and another 11 minutes from time from Paul Groves eliminated Chesterfield, who had recovered from two goals down at Blundell Park to earn the replay.

The class of Cheltenham, the Vauxhall Conference club, finally told over Boreham Wood, from the Ryman

League. Bob Bloomer put the visitors ahead in the 42nd minute and Jimmy Smith finished the job in the 68th to take Cheltenham through to a home tie against Reading.

Steve Cotterill, the Cheltenham manager, said: "We didn't play particularly well in the first game and we didn't play that well today, but we put in a thoroughly professional performance and it's fantastic to reach this far."

Bob Makin, the Boreham Wood manager, said: "I'm absolutely devastated with that performance because my whole team did not perform."

Two extra-time goals from the Watford teenager, Giffon Noel-Williams, ended Torquay's hopes of a second consecutive cup win over second division opposition after their defeat of Luton Town in the first round. Noel-Williams broke the deadlock at Vicarage Road when he scored just seconds into the additional 30 minutes and then he scored again in the 108th minute. In between, Gary Clayton scored for Torquay. Watford are at home to Sheffield Wednesday in the third round.

Kevin Hodges, the Torquay head coach, said: "I could not have asked more from my team. They showed tremendous character."

A ninety-minute equaliser for Preston from Dave Moyes and a winner from David Eyres six minutes into extra-time broke the hearts of Notts County, the third division pace-setters, at Meadow Lane. Sean Farrell's 51st-minute goal seemed to have put County through against their second division opponents and given them a chance to embarrass first division opposition at home to Stockport County.

Hereford United beat Colchester 5-4 on penalties after a 1-1 draw at home. Steven Forbes put Colchester ahead, but Neil Grayson equalised within seconds. Hereford are at home to Tranmere Rovers in the next round.



Everett, the Swansea winger, breaks through the Durham defence; he scored a try as Swansea won easily, 27-11, away from home in the North East-based pool one. Photograph: Raoul Dixon

Darricarere kicks Toulouse to semi-final berth in the wind

By MARK SOUSTER

THE likely semi-final line-up in the inaugural *The Times* Students European Rugby Championship emerged after the second round of games yesterday. University of Wales, Institute of Cardiff (UWIC), Swansea and Toulouse all won for the second time, while Oxford or Cork will contest the outcome of pool four.

The match of the round took place in France, where Toulouse and Loughborough knew that the winners would almost certainly progress to the last four from pool two. In front of a crowd of more than 1,500, Toulouse edged home 26-22.

Playing with the wind in the first half, Loughborough took full advantage and led 22-3 at half-time after scoring three tries. It was a different story in the second half as Toulouse replied with 23 unanswered points. Jeannard, Joanny and Mamalia each scored a try, but the French side had to wait until the final five minutes before David Darricarere dropped a goal and added a late penalty to earn his side victory.

In the other game from the pool, University College, Dublin beat Northumbria 14-0.

Qualification for the North East-based pool one rested between Swansea and Durham, the hosts. They met yesterday with Swansea emerging as



Results 45

the winners 27-11. Durham took the lead through Lee Cholewa, but a sustained period of Swansea pressure and some slick handling earned them tries by Owen Jones and Griffiths, the No 8.

The turning point in the match was the concession in injury-time of the first half of a soft try scored for Swansea by Donovan, the right wing, for a 17-5 lead. Further scores by Everett and Lewsey maintained Swansea's comfortable advantage.

Also in pool one, a hat-trick of tries by McLoughlin, the left wing, was the prominent feature in Dublin's 45-12 defeat of Roma, who took the lead

through Fabrice but then buckled under Dublin's attack.

UWIC continue to set a cracking pace in pool three and, on their present form, look a sound bet to win the tournament. After rattling up more than 100 points against Queen's, Belfast on Monday, they put 60 points past Exeter at Cyncoed yesterday.

Despite the conditions, UWIC's class was readily apparent as they built up a 20-9 half-time advantage. Exeter, whose points came from three, Owen Ashton penalty goals, had no answer to UWIC's speed and ball handling as Graham Thomas helped himself to a hat-trick of tries, while Steve Jones and Gavin Evans each scored two. Carl Morgan, Jonathon Williams and Adrian Evans also got on the scoresheet.

UWIC's final game is this afternoon, against Edinburgh, who surprisingly lost to Queen's, Belfast. The Scottish side led 15-0 at half-time, but a change of shirts from blue to more traditional emerald green at the interval did the trick for the Irish. They ran in five tries, which included a brace for John Patton, the full back.

The winners of pool four will be decided by the final match between Oxford and Cork tomorrow. Oxford proved too strong for Cardiff Medicals, winning 27-3, yesterday. Cork's match against Bristol was a late kick-off.

RUGBY UNION

Richmond pave way for return of Hallett

By DAVID HANDS
RUGBY CORRESPONDENT

RICHMOND, having moved into third place in the Allied Dunbar Premiership with victory over Leicester on a bitter Tuesday night could hardly keep themselves out of the public eye yesterday. Their announcement of a new chief executive, Tony Hallett, will create waves at nearby Twickenham, while they also found themselves involved in a spat with Bristol over an alleged stamping.

Hallett resigned as chairman of Richmond — then lurking in the third division of the Courage Clubs Championship — when he became secretary of the Rugby Football Union (RFU) in 1995. His period at the helm became a chapter of conflict since it coincided with the introduction of professionalism and he resigned in August after a series of disagreements within the RFU, in which Hallett and Cliff Brittle, the chairman of what was then the executive committee, were perceived as the main protagonists.

Hallett, 52, will replace Symon Elliott, who is taking up a position in the City, in January. "It is ironic that I was chairman of Richmond in the amateur days and now I am back in the hectic world of professionalism," Hallett said. Back, moreover, with one of the more hawkish members of the first division, though the RFU would not disagree with his sentiments regarding the development of English players.

"The non-English players are making a big contribution at most premiership clubs now," Hallett said, "but, for the good of Richmond and English rugby, we hope to produce home-grown players of a similar, or better, standard. It is easy to spend money now when you have access to a rich investor, but we want to utilise our developing mini/youth section and our development academy as a pipeline for English players coming into the first XV. Money available also needs to be used to develop the ground and its facilities."

In the wake of Tuesday's 32-15 defeat of Leicester, however, Richmond found that Barry Williams, their Wales hooker, has been cited by Bristol, who claim that he stamped on the head of Paul Burke, their fly half, during the 13-12 win at the Memorial Ground last Saturday. "Paul is severely shaken by the incident and is still having difficulty moving his jaw," Fred Howard, the Bristol rugby manager, said.

Though Richmond, in a statement, refuted the allegation, they have fined the player. "We do not condone foul play and we are sorry to hear that Paul Burke sustained an injury," the club said. "However, having reviewed the video evidence, we categorically refute that Williams intended any injury to the player — indeed, his foot seemed to make contact with the player's chest. If we all must work on this basis, then Richmond must, in turn, cite Phil Adams for his deliberate stamp on Craig Quinnell (for which Adams received a yellow card)."

Quinnell was one of the heroes of the victory over Leicester, who have lost their half backs for the forthcoming game against Harlequins as a result. Joel Stranksy, the South African fly half, will be out for three or four weeks after displacing a rib cartilage and Jamie Hamilton, the scrum half, sustained a trapped nerve in his neck, which makes it likely that Austin Healey and Waisale Seru will form a new half-back pairing.

Bristol, who hope that they can resolve their financial problems by selling their ground and leasing it back, have signed Adam Larkin from North Harbour, the New Zealand first division province. Larkin, 23, can play centre or fly half.

Sedloski transfer hangs in balance

SHEFFIELD Wednesday's hopes of finalising the transfer of Goce Sedloski for £1.75 million from Hajduk Split have been dampened after the Macedonian international failed a medical yesterday. The news on Tuesday that Sedloski, 23, would face a delay in obtaining a work permit means that his debut for Wednesday looks further away than ever.

Ron Atkinson, the Wednesday manager, refused to confirm the extent of the problem, but said: "The X-rays have shown up something which could later give him some trouble. We will now have to renegotiate and restructure the deal because we want to safeguard our interests. I still want the player to join us, but we will have to look for an incentive scheme, like a pay-as-you-play type deal."

Atkinson's enthusiasm to sign Sedloski could be tempered by the player's club, who will also have to agree to the package. Atkinson added: "They [Hajduk Split] are going to have him looked at by their medical people and we will then have to see where we go from there."

Even if Wednesday agree terms with Hajduk, they could have to wait for up to a month before Sedloski can obtain a work permit. Nigeria's Football Association announced yesterday that Bora Milutinovic, the former Mexico coach, has been chosen to lead the national side at the 1998 World Cup finals in France. The military government in Nigeria has given its approval to the choice and the contract is expected to be signed today.

Scots ask for Danish double

By OUR SPORTS STAFF

SCOTLAND are trying to arrange two matches against Denmark next March so that they can give as many players as possible the chance to impress before the World Cup finals.

The first-choice team is due to face the Danes, who have also qualified for France, on March 25, probably at Ibrox. Craig Brown, the manager, is also keen to arrange a B team match so that he can test his fringe players. The Danish football association has been approached, but is not expected to give its decision until the new year.

Scotland are due to face

Finland in April before probably embarking on a two-match trip to the United States the next month. Then they will settle into their French base in St Remy de Provence as Brown finalises his preparations for the opening match against Brazil, the World Cup holders, on June 10.

Meanwhile, Scotland's leading ten clubs confirmed yesterday that they will reject a new proposal from Bell's Scottish League first division teams in the dispute about a new premiership. It is understood that the first division sides, who

met at Love Street, the home of St Mirren, yesterday, will be campaigning for an immediate premiership of 12 clubs from next season before they give their blessing to the breakaway. They are also understood to be seeking compensation of a minimum £2.5 million each year for the next 20 years to be paid to the Scottish League.

However, Lex Gold, the Hibernian chairman and spokesman for the premier division clubs, said: "Our position remains unchanged — we are driving forward towards establishing a new league at the end of this season."

Late developer makes light of age concerns

Ian Wright, of Arsenal and England, is the footballer most often held up as an inspiration to all potential late developers who dream of glory while slogging in front of a few hundred people in the semi-professional game.

However, even Wright has nothing on Addie Miles, who is close to joining the professional ranks at the age of 36, when many players are considering hanging up their boots for good.

Miles, a striker who plays for Bognor Regis Town in the Ryman League, was spotted by Leyton Orient scouts during a game against Wembley, in which he

scored a hat-trick in only 21 minutes. He scored his 23rd goal of the season, in his 27th game, in Bognor's 4-0 win against Thame United on Saturday and was due to play for Orient in a match against Tottenham Hotspur last week until the weather intervened.

Nevertheless, he has been invited back to Brisbane Road by Tommy Taylor, the Orient manager, and seems to have few doubts about his ability to grasp his opportunity. "I know I'm getting on in years in terms of becoming a professional footballer, but I'm the fittest I've ever been," Miles said.

He had a six-year rest between the ages of 16 and 22

Nick Szczepanik on the striker ready to take a belated step into professional football

when, he said, "I literally never kicked a ball", preferring to concentrate on badminton, which he played to county level in Essex, rather than pursue a possible career with Southend United. Working as a diamond setter, he appeared occasionally for Sutton United and Woking, among others, before joining Bognor from Pagham, of the

Unijet Sussex County League first division. "At 30, 31, I started improving again," he said. "Jack Pearce [the Bognor manager] has really got the best out of me."

He is in his third season with Bognor, during which time he has scored 73 times and finished as leading scorer in each season. Among those hopeful that Miles is successful will be the headline writers, for whom the potential of Bognor's rough diamond is manna from heaven.

It could, of course, be something in the sea air around Bognor. Colin Matthews, the goalkeeper, a mere stripling at 28,

has also attracted attention in the capital.

He played in a trial match for West Ham United against Bournemouth at Dean Court last week, watched by Harry Redknapp, the West Ham manager, and Frank Burrows, the reserve team manager, and was invited to train for a week with the London club.

"I reckon I've got another few good years left in me," Matthews said. "It's not too late for a goalkeeper to go into the pro game at my age."

He may be right. Peter Shilton was 47 when he reached 1,000 league games last season — for Leyton Orient.



Miles has attracted the attention of Leyton Orient

CRICKET: DAMP CONDITIONS MAY ASSIST AGAINST AUSTRALIA IN WORLD CUP

England face true test of strength

FROM THRASY PETROPOULOS IN NAGPUR

THE England women's team face their toughest test so far in the World Cup today when they play Australia in Nagpur in the final round of qualifying matches before the quarter-finals. The winner of the match will top pool A and should enjoy the easier draw through to the final.

After a hard-fought victory over South Africa a week ago, England have enjoyed embarrassingly easy victories over Pakistan, Denmark and Ireland, passing 300 runs in 50 overs on all three occasions and winning by 230, 194 and 208 runs respectively.

Australia, three winners of the World Cup, will be desperate to atone for their unexpect-

edly poor showing in 1993, when they lost to England. With opposition thus motivated, this match will go a long way to indicating whether England are capable of retaining their crown. They should be full of confidence in the batting department, with Jan Brinin, Barbara Daniels and Charlotte Edwards having scored centuries, but they have dismissed only Ireland in their matches to date.

It would be churlish to be critical of the bowlers, when a side is defending 300-plus scores. It is difficult to create pressure in the field. Criticism can be levelled, though, at the

decision by captain and management to bat first against Ireland. England have yet to field first on this tour and have come to India out of season. The time for experimentation has gone.

Australia are fresh from a 363-run victory over Denmark in Bombay, in which Belinda Clark hit a world record 229 not out off only 157 balls, two more than Edwards faced during her 173 not out against Ireland on the same day.

Clark, though, believes England will be a different proposition. "This will be a good yardstick to where the teams stand," she said. "If we were

playing in Australia, it would be different, but the conditions in India pull the teams closer together."

Those conditions are likely to be damp and muggy and more to England's liking. England will be desperate to gain the upper hand against the team they could easily meet in the final.

Pool B concluded yesterday with India involved in a thrilling tie with New Zealand in Indore and Holland defeating Sri Lanka by 47 runs in Jaipur. All four teams progress to the quarter-finals, with West Indies missing out.

ENGLAND: K. Smith, S. Metcalfe, C. Edwards, J. Brinin, B. Daniels, J. Caesar, M. Raymond, K. Lang, C. Connor, S. Hodgson, C. Taylor.

MCC hierarchy backs election of women

By OUR SPORTS STAFF

A SPECIAL general meeting of MCC has been called for February 24 to decide whether to admit women as members for the first time. The committee is supporting the proposal.

Roger Knight, the club secretary, has sent members a report of last week's meeting, when the committee decided on the radical change. "The committee, by a large majority, has now reached the view that the time has come to adopt the rule changes necessary to allow for the election of ladies to the membership of the club," Knight writes.

"While the committee hopes that the membership will share these conclusions, it

acknowledges that this is a matter for each individual member to decide for himself. A two-thirds majority of votes cast will be required."

"The committee's support, along with the backing already voiced by Colin Ingleby-Mackenzie, the president, is cause for optimism, according to Rachel Heyhoe-Flint, a persistent campaigner.

Highlights from the final of the Champions Trophy between England and West Indies in Sharjah tomorrow will be shown on BBC *Grandstand* on Saturday. Hampshire have signed Peter Hartley, the long-serving Yorkshire seam bowler.

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EQUESTRIANISM

Smith loses chance of World Cup success

By Jenny MacArthur

ROBERT SMITH'S hopes for a second successive win in the Volvo World Cup qualifier at the Olympia show jumping championships, which start today in the Grand Hall, Olympia, have been dashed because of the withdrawal of Senator Tees Hanauer, his top horse.

The 17-year-old gelding, whose performances at the Amsterdam, Brussels and Berlin qualifiers this season have lifted Smith to No 10 in the World Cup rankings, has sustained a slight tendon injury and will be rested until after Christmas.

Smith, who is the only Briton to feature in the top 20 of the World Cup rankings, will now ride either Senator Schorn or Senator For The Best in the qualifier on Saturday afternoon, but with both horses only recently back on the circuit after "niggling" injuries, he does not rate his chances of success very highly in what looks set to be the most competitive qualifier of the season.

Nine of the top ten riders on the present world ranking list are competing, including Will Melliger, of Switzerland, the Olympic silver medal-winner, and the two leading German riders, Ludger Beerbaum, the European champion, and Franke Sloothaak, the world champion.

Great Britain, which boasted four riders in the top ten six months ago, now has only John Whitaker, but Geoff Billington, Michael Whitaker and Nick Skelton, ranked at No 11, No 12 and No 17 respectively, will all attempt to reinstate themselves this weekend.

John Whitaker, although at No 3 in the world rankings, is also in need of a boost. His disappointing performance in Berlin last month, where he sustained a heavy fall in the qualifier after Welham failed to clear the back pole of a parallel, has left him trailing in as joint-No 57 in the World Cup rankings — from which the top 19 qualify for the final in Finland in April.

Whitaker, who competes today in the opening Petplan family pairs relay with his son, Robert, and daughter, Louise, will decide tomorrow whether to ride Virtual Village Welham or Granusch on Saturday afternoon.

Billington, who, in it's Otto, has the most talented horse of the 16 Britons competing, is hoping Bob Ellis, the course designer, will "build big" for the qualifier. "The more difficult it is, the better for me," Billington said in a reference to his Dutch gelding's effortless scope. In both Berlin and Geneva, the only two World Cup events in which he has competed this season, a frustrating four faults in the opening round kept him out of contention.

Billington, a natural showman, can be guaranteed to help entertain the 67,000 who will flock to Olympia this week. The Show's winning formula — devised by the late Raymond Brooks-Ward 26 years ago — stems from its heady mix of serious showjumping and Christmas frivolity.

Sporting legends who have gloried in excess avoirdupois

Roly-polies can pull their weight



Christmas is coming and sportsmen are getting fat — and some of them are not at all happy about turning into sporting Teleubbies. On Tuesday, Shane Warne, the Australia Test cricketer, rolled out of a news conference in Melbourne, wobbling with rage after being asked about his weight.

He was attending the unveiling of a waxwork model of himself when he was asked by a reporter if he preferred the leaner lines of his wax image. "That's why I don't answer any questions from you blokes," Warne spluttered. "That's it, you've ruined it. Thanks very much."

Warne should learn to watch his sense of proportion — for the glorious truth is that sport has always had its helping of fat boys and, as long as they have been able to produce great performances, they have been loved and respected by players and spectators alike.

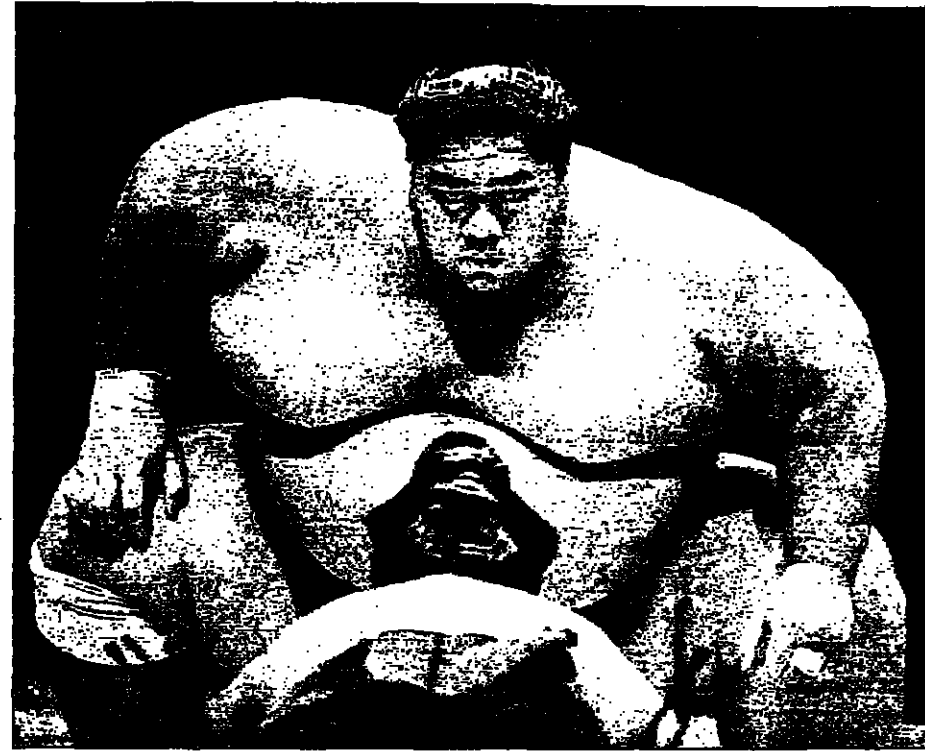
In some sports, the Sportybuddies are naturals, and Warne shouldn't worry too much because cricket is one of them. Dr W. G. Grace, the father of them all, was a giant of a batsman in every way — though, in his youth, he was slim and athletic enough to win gold medals on the track for hurdling.

Concern over Ian Botham's waistline at times ate up as many column inches as analysis of his averages, while Mike Gatting fought a long and losing battle against his love for Bransford pickle sandwiches.

Back in Australia, the critics of Warne should remember the fine play of Warwick Armstrong, the captain who led them to eight successive wins over England in 1920 and 1921. He took to the pitch at well over 20st and was known affectionately as "The Big Ship".

Despite the best efforts of the dieticians, football, too, has always had its share of fat favourites — none more criticised for his weight than Paul Gascoigne, whose size goes up and down like a Richard Branson balloon. In Italy, they got him down from 14st 7lb to 11st 4lb by putting him on a Mediterranean diet — which meant red wine instead of pints of lager.

In some sports, like tug o'war, wrestling or American football, the extra ballast can be a positive advantage. William Perry, the American footballer, who played for the Chicago Bears in the Eighties, was employed just for his size. He weighed 28st and was known as "The Refrigerator".



Konishiki, a Sumo wrestler known, not surprisingly, as "The Dumpptruck", makes Botham, left, and Gatting, both partial to a good lunch, look sylphlike figures while "Fatty" Foulke, the mountainous English goalkeeper, pales in comparison

Some sportsmen grow fat without trying, while others are practically forced to. In Sumo wrestling, they like to select their future champions as children and fatten them up like geese being pumped for their *pâté de foie gras*.

In darts, the figure of a Jocky Wilson is no disadvantage and snooker's nubbies can take their cue from Bill Werbeniuk, the great Canadian, who gloried in his 20st and steadied his arm with eighteen pints of lager per match.

Boxers, of course, like Jockeys, have always been preoccupied with weight. They often have real problems when they try to lose surplus pounds too rapidly in the run-up to a contest by fasting or sweating it off in order to make the weight. The danger is that they will go into the ring dehydrated, badly weak-

ened and risking serious injury. The super-heavyweights, of course, have no such problems and are often remembered as much for their size as for their skill. So it is for his nickname that we recall the American heavyweight "Two-ton" Tony Galento rather than for the fact that he was beaten by the great Joe Louis.

The secret of many a fat sportsman of the past has been to acquire a memorable nickname, to relax and to glory in the power of his size. Perhaps "Waxy" Warne could learn a lesson from these giants of sporting history.

The greatest of them all was surely the formidable English goalkeeper, William "Fatty" Foulke. He was sometimes also known as "Little Willie" and he kept balls out of the net for his country in the late 19th century.

He once hit 23st and helped Sheffield United to two FA Cup victories and one League championship. He was said to be able to carry a man under each arm and to regularly punch a football as far as the halfway line.

On one occasion, he brought a game to a halt when

In some sports the extra ballast can be a positive advantage

he snapped a crossbar. Another time, he had to be carried off injured, but he was far too big for the stretcher and it took six strong men to lift him.

He was also feared for his temper. In one game, he picked up George Allan, the Liverpool centre forward, and planted him head first in the muddy goalmouth. Liverpool won as a result of the penalty that followed.

On another occasion, when "Fatty" was on a losing FA Cup final side, he was enraged by the decisions of the referee, Tom Kirkham. His anger boiled over as he lay in the team bath after the match and a few minutes later a vast, steaming, naked goalkeeper was seen charging around Crystal Palace hunting the hapless official.

Foulke transferred as captain to Chelsea in 1905, taking with him his legend and his appetite. One morning before a match, he got into the dining room ahead of his team-mates and, finding the food ready, polished off all eleven breakfasts.

When they cried foul and called him all sorts of names, he replied with a line that Shane Warne would do well to borrow — "I don't care what you call me, as long as you don't call me late for dinner."

JOHN BRYANT

VOLLEYBALL

Financial cuts force Britain to disband

By John Goodbody

THE Great Britain men's team has had to be disbanded because of cuts in funding from the taxpayer. Although the team has only had a properly-funded programme for seven years, it has enjoyed recent success, including victories over Australia, Romania, Saudi Arabia and France.

However, after a review by the United Kingdom Sports Council and the British Olympic Association, it was decided that "until such time as qualification for the Olympics becomes a real prospect for indoor volleyball, the development of the sport within the United Kingdom would be best administered at a home country level". England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are members of the International Volleyball Federation, while Britain has never qualified for the Olympics since the sport became a regular part of the Games programme 25 years ago.

The British Volleyball Federation (BVF) had applied for a grant of £84,000, but the UK Sports Council has given it £43,000 in the present financial year and "transitional funding" of £25,000 for 1998-99 so that "key development projects for the sport can continue to be supported until new funding partners can be found".

The decision has been met with outrage. Mike McKeever, the BVF secretary, said: "With nothing for young talent to aim for, the sport's youth is bound to be lost either to other games or, worse, to British sport altogether."

"Even run-of-the-mill players will have little incentive to improve. The bid for medals will have been put back more than the seven years and the Government's 'Sport for All' policy will have lost some of its credibility."

ROWING

Amateur era ends at Henley

By Mike Rosewell, Rowing Correspondent

THE stewards of Henley Royal Regatta have broken a 159-year tradition and abandoned the requirement that all competitors at their meeting should be amateur. Mike Sweeney, the Henley chairman, said: "The stewards recognise that the concept of an amateur status is no longer valid at the highest levels."

"Henley is, therefore, following the lead of Fisa, the international governing body, which removed all references to 'amateur' in its rules and introduced a new concept of 'eligibility' last summer."

Henley will not turn away foreign crews who are paid to row or whose sponsors promise win bonuses. The Amateur Rowing Association (ARA) has yet to clarify its "amateur" rule for British crews, but changes could come before the next Henley meeting.

Another era ended yesterday when DI Ellis, the chairman of the ARA, became the first directly-elected female steward of the regatta. Two other new stewards, Richard Stanhope and Richard Phelps, are former Great Britain internationals.

Membership of the stewards' enclosure increased to 6,410 from 6,042 in 1996. Henley's assets increased by 14 per cent to £3.7 million and the event's sister trading company, after recording a growth of 43 per cent, donated £300,000 to the stewards' charitable trust, which aims to provide for the development of youth rowing.

Win Christmas fizz

By Simon Barnes

MAGIC numbers, and free champagne, what more could possibly be desired by anyone with sporting blood in the veins? Once again, *The Times* is able to offer bottled bliss, in the form of Nicolas Feuillate champagne, to anyone who contributes a Magic Number this Christmas.

A Magic Number is one that carries immense sporting weight. Some numbers carry weight for all time, like Don Bradman's 99.94 or Torville and Dean's 6, but every year throws up new numbers. How about 78, 0, and 0? These are the numbers for Michael Schumacher: the 78 points he was docked for crashing into Jacques Villeneuve, the zero points he was left with and the zero fine he was given. I will



judge the numbers for their champagne-worthiness. Entries should be sent to me at:

The Sports Desk,
The Times,
1 Pennington Street,
London E1 9XN
or by fax to 0171 782 5211.
The final collection is to be published shortly after Christmas, so do it soon.

FOR THE RECORD

BASKETBALL

EUROPEAN CUP: Real Madrid (Spain) 71, London Towers 64.
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION (NBA): Cleveland Cavaliers 90, Miami Heat 88; Los Angeles Lakers 100, Minnesota Timberwolves 96; New York Knicks 118, Houston Rockets 101; Denver Nuggets 100, Golden State Warriors 93; Dallas Mavericks 103, San Antonio Spurs 94; Seattle SuperSonics 94, Portland Trail Blazers 87.

CRICKET

World Series Cup
Australia v New Zealand
Melbourne (New Zealand won 2008)
Australia beat New Zealand by six wickets.
NEW ZEALAND:
N J Hume c Gilbert b Dave 3
N J Hume c Gilbert b Dave 30
C L Cairns b Gilbert b Wilson 6
C P Fleming c Brown b Wilson 6
C O McLennan c Harvey b Wilson 6
P C Parore c Gilbert b Wilson 6
C Z Harris not out 62
V C Vance b Brown 14
G R Larsen c S R Walsh b Brown 10
S B O'Connor not out 14
Extras (b 4, w 5, nb 5) 141
Total (48.5 overs) 141
FALL OF WICKETS: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 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1016, 1017, 1018, 1019, 1020, 1021, 1022, 1023, 1024, 1025, 1026, 1027, 1028, 1029, 1030, 1031, 1032, 1033, 1034, 1035, 1036, 1037, 1038, 1039, 1040, 1041, 1042, 1043, 1044, 1045, 1046, 1047, 1048, 1049, 1050, 1051, 1052, 1053, 1054, 1055, 1056, 1057, 1058, 1059, 1060, 1061, 1062, 1063, 1064, 1065, 1066, 1067, 1068, 1069, 1070, 1071, 1072, 1073, 1074, 1075, 1076, 1077, 1078, 1079, 1080, 1081, 1082, 1083, 1084, 1085, 1086, 1087, 1088, 1089, 1090, 1091, 1092, 1093, 1094, 1095, 1096, 1097, 1098, 1099, 1100, 1101, 1102, 1103, 1104, 1105, 1106, 1107, 1108, 1109, 1110, 1111, 1112, 1113, 1114, 1115, 1116, 1117, 1118, 1119, 1120, 1121, 1122, 1123, 1124, 1125, 1126, 1127, 1128, 1129, 1130, 1131, 1132, 1133, 1134, 1135, 1136, 1137, 1138, 1139, 1140, 1141, 1142, 1143, 1144, 1145, 1146, 1147, 1148, 1149, 1150, 1151, 1152, 1153, 1154, 1155, 1156, 1157, 1158, 1159, 1160, 1161, 1162, 1163, 1164, 1165, 1166, 1167, 1168, 1169, 1170, 1171, 1172, 1173, 1174, 1175, 1176, 1177, 1178, 1179, 1180, 1181, 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Hamed gets ready to land decisive blow in defence of his title



Warren, Hamed's promoter, poses with his boxer and with Hamed's opponent, Kelley, left, at a press conference at Madison Square Garden

Angry Kelley eyes main chance

FROM SRIKUMAR SEN, BOXING CORRESPONDENT, IN NEW YORK

Over the past two weeks, Naseem Hamed has been selling himself with great success on television and cable here, but Kevin Kelley, his opponent tomorrow at Madison Square Garden, has been reluctant to talk. He claimed that he has been too busy training for this contest in the Pocono Mountains of Pennsylvania.

In fact, he is not inclined to help HBO, the television cable company that is backing Hamed, to sell the bout. In the Eighties, Kelley would promote his appearances by driving around New York handing out pencils with his name on them, sweets, cookies and T-shirts, but, on this occasion, he has refused to do even that.

The reason is simple. Although Kelley was a regular on HBO boxing presentations for many years, the company is paying big money to Hamed, who is little known in the United States, and not to him. Hamed is receiving \$2 million (about £1.2 million) for this contest. Kelley just \$600,000.

While television stations are captivated by Hamed's showmanship and have

given him prime time coverage, the newspapers have not been over-generous to the Sheffield man. New York boxing writers are hard to please and are never too enamoured of Britons at the best of times. They are suspicious of hype and publicity and have preferred to listen to the complaints of their man.

Kelley surfaced on Tuesday at a face-to-face press conference at the Garden and, after engaging in a 20-minute shouting match in which no one could understand what he or Hamed was saying, he could not put his point of view to journalists. He could not understand why a Brooklyn boxer should get second billing to a foreigner.

Seth Abraham, the head of HBO and the man backing the British boxer with a multimillion-dollar deal, had an answer for him, however. "I told Kevin: 'And God bless you if you beat him.' He will get the same commitment from HBO as Hamed is getting."

Lou Di Bella, the vice-president of HBO, went further: "This represents a great opportunity for Kevin," he said.

"He's a terrific, exciting HBO fighter. If he beats Hamed, he will move up to a level of popularity that he didn't have before. Kevin will benefit from the publicity that we've done for Hamed."

Yet that hurt Kelley even more. After all, having given years of loyal service to HBO, did it need a foreigner to make his cause deserving? Phil Borgia, his trainer, said: "Words are cheap. We heard such talk before, but we ain't seen HBO take the walk yet."

Kelley added: "Hamed didn't start all this — I did. I was the first to put the featherweights on the map after 25 years. That's why Hamed and Junior Jones and Kennedy McKinney and all the others are getting the kind of treatment that I should have got a long time ago. They are jumping the gun with this guy. They are putting too much into a man who is not known, who does not come from this city, even this country. People have thrown money at him like tuna fish."

You can't blame Kelley for complaining. He has never had it easy. Despite

being the No 1 contender in 1991, he had to wait two years before he got his chance to fight for the title. He won the World Boxing Council championship in 1993, but lost it two years later after a severe beating from Alejandro Gonzalez, of Mexico. Kelley retired after that, came back six months later, but has never recaptured his old form.

Kelley came to England recently to see Hamed defend his World Boxing Organisation title against José Badillo and said all the right things in order to secure this contest — but now things have gone sour. "Hamed is not a pioneer," he said. "He has learnt showmanship from Muhammad Ali, but Ali did it with a smile. Hamed does it arrogantly. Guys in my neighbourhood keep telling me to beat his butt."

"My aunt, who is really a religious lady and doesn't speak bad about anybody, called me the other day and said: 'Kevin, I saw those commercials and he's so arrogant and so nasty, that's not God-like. You need to give him a beating. He needs it.'"

TELEVISION CHOICE
Treating chronic fatigueNatural Born Healers
Channel 4, 8.00pm

The series on complementary medicine concludes by looking at what it can do for one of the more contentious diseases, chronic fatigue syndrome also known as ME. Although dismissed in some quarters as yuppy flu, this programme at least is prepared to take it seriously and nobody would suggest that Roy Haggerty is fibbing when he talks of a miserable three years of broken nights, blurred vision and debilitating lack of energy. His GP, Dr Peter May, is sceptical about alternative treatments but prepared to let Dr Julian Kenyon, who believes in them, take Haggerty under his wing. There is no instant miracle. May accuses Kenyon of "pulling wacky ideas out of the blue" and remains unimpressed. But there is evidence to suggest that alternative methods may succeed where conventional ones have failed.

Was It Good For You?
Channel 5, 8.00pm

The holiday programme visits Mexico in the company of three groups of Britons doing very different things. For Rachel, Christine and Eileen, nurses and a physio from a London hospital who have been backpacking for three months, Mexico is a chance to unwind and do nothing very much. Jon and Nick, friends from Leeds, give up their usual holiday pursuits of birds and booze in favour of scuba diving, while the Allingtons and their two sons take a coach tour in search of local culture. The series has more than a whiff of Channel 4's *Real Holiday Show*, except that it goes to one place at a time and sends the presenters along too. Indeed, what with camera crews tracking every move, and chirpy little Ailsa Greenhalgh popping up in the middle of everything, you wonder what sort of a holiday these people are having.

Dover
ITV, 8.30pm

The Channel port documentary has been short on high drama and unlike *Holiday Rome* it does not have regular characters to sustain the interest. One gathers, too, that legal constraints may have censored the more dramatic triumphs of HM Customs. The sniffer dogs have usually sniffed in



Les Godley shows his respect (ITV, 8.30pm)

vain. But there is a striking sequence in this latest episode as Dover comes to a halt in memory of the Diana, Princess of Wales. It is the day of the funeral and bringing a busy port to a standstill to observe a minute's silence is a big operation. Port police form a guard of honour and staff and passengers bow their heads until a cannon shot signals that the minute is up. The arrival of a cruise liner, ironically called the *Royal Princess*, provides the other main storyline, given spice by luggage ending up in the sea.

Scare Stories: Sinking the Ark
BBC2, 9.25pm

The final programme in a bold series about televisionism turns to the animal conservationists. The film reminds us that until about 30 years ago the Old Testament view that animals were there to be hunted, tamed and eaten had gone largely unchallenged. Then the conservation movement took off and its arguments became as powerful as the protection of species became the new orthodoxy. The film pays tribute to the energy and persistence of conservationists' campaigns. But it does suggest that some of their darkest predictions have been based on dubious evidence and that saving wildlife first has had adverse consequences for many ordinary people. Saving 5,000 Indian tigers may have been a laudable crusade, but it led to nearly one million peasants being evicted from their land.

Peter Waymark

RADIO CHOICE

Thursday Afternoon Play: Clever As Paint
Radio 4, 2.00pm

Readers who can spend time near a radio on weekday afternoons know of riches others can only dream about, and this slot on Thursdays often provides proof. *Clever As Paint* is a clever title for a play about the Pre-Raphaelites, the leading lights of the art world in mid-Victorian London. Kim Morrissey's dramatisation is set at Christmas and focuses on three of the most famous of the movement's figures: Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Lizzy Siddall and William Morris. The tortured relationship between these three led to the suicide of Siddall in her twenties, after years of suffering over the infidelity of her husband, Rossetti, not least with Morris's wife. The leads are played here by Imogen Stubbs, Paul Rhys and Jonathan Cake.

RADIO 1

6.30am Kevin Greening and Zoë Ball 9.00 Simon Mayo 12.00 Jo Whiteley 12.30pm Newsbeat 2.00 Mark Radcliffe 4.00 The Perfume 6.15 Breakfast 6.30 Evening Session with Steve Lamacq 6.30 Movie Update with Mark Kermode 6.40 John Peel 10.30 Mary Anne Hobbs 12.00 Blue Jam 1.00am Chris Weller 4.00 Chris Moyles

RADIO 2

6.00am Sarah Kennedy 7.30 Wake Up to Wogan 9.30 Ken Bruce 11.30am Jimmy Young 1.30pm Debbie Thorne 3.00 Ed Stewart 5.05 Radio 2's Afternoon Show 6.30 The Paul Jones 9.00 Smokey Robinson's Soul Selection 9.30 The Russ Abbot Show 10.00 The Comedy Quiz 10.30 Radio 2's Afternoon Show 12.00am Steve Madden 3.00 Alex Lester

RADIO 5 LIVE

6.00am The Breakfast Programme 6.30 David Meltzer 12.00 Midday with Mark 2.00pm Fussco on Five 4.00 Nationwide with Julian Worlock 7.00 News Extra with Nick McNeil 7.30 Football on the Brink 8.00 Inside Edge with Rob Barnett and the team 9.00 SportsAmerica with Alan Byrd 9.30 Sportshop 10.00 News Talk 11.00 News Extra with David McNeil 12.00 After Hours 2.00am Up At Night with Richard Dwyer 5.00 Morning Reports

VIRGIN RADIO

5.00am Jeremy Clark 7.00 Chris Evans 10.00 (FM) Robin Barrie (AM) Graham Dene 1.00pm (FM) Nick Abbot (AM) Nicky Horse 4.00 Russ or Jane 7.00 (FM) Paul Coope (AM) Calum Jones 10.00 Mark Forrest 2.00am Richard Porter

TALK RADIO

6.30am Paul Ross and Carol McGiffin 9.00 Scott Chisholm 12.00 Louise Kelly 2.00pm Tony Boyd 4.00 Paul Kelly 7.00 Anna Rastburn 9.00 James Whitley 1.00am Ian Collins

RADIO 3

6.00am On Air, with Stephanie Hughes, including Haydn (Mass in G, Missa Horale coil desoper), Brahms (Violin Sonata No 3 in D minor, Op 109), Grieg (Hovv Fair Thou Art, Op 74 No 1); Best (The In C) Glinka (Overture Russian and Lullaby)

9.00 Morning Collection, with Peter Hobbday, Dvorak (Symphony No 9 in E major, Op 95), Brahms (Symphony No 96 in D, Op 108), Ravel (Gaspard de la Nuit), Niles (Black is the Colour), Lawton (Five Pieces), Shostakovich (Festive Overture), Beethoven (Fidelio, excerpts)

12.00 Composer of the Week: Prokofiev

1.00pm The Operatic Year, Hugh Canning, Andrew Clements and Michael Oliver consider recordings conducted by Marc Minkowski, with Nick McNeil, Minkowski in the principal soprano role: Baldassarre La Dame Blanche and Rossini's L'inganno Felice. Plus Beethoven's La Sonnambula, conducted by Alberto Zedda

2.00 The BBC Orchestra, BBC Symphony Orchestra, Wagner (Overture Die Meistersinger), under Andrew Davis, Hindemith (Symphonic Metamorphoses), under Günther Herbig, Prokofiev (Piano Concerto No 3), Shostakovich (Symphony No 5), under Andrew Davis, with John Lill, piano

4.00 Ensemble, Penny Gore introduces a recital by Lorraine McKelvey, voice and Nigel Clayton, piano. Suk (Four Pieces), Saint-Saëns (Violin Sonata No 1)

1 in D minor (f)

4.45 Music Machine, Tommy Pearson discovers the ways in which bells feature in music and out to around the world

5.00 In Tune, with Sean Rafferty

7.00 Performance on 3: Macbeth. A new production by Graham Vick of Verdi's opera version of Shakespeare's play, to a libretto by Francesco Maria Place. With Renato Bruson, baritone, Maria Guleghina, soprano, Roberto Alagna, tenor, Chorus and Orchestra of the Teatro alla Scala, under Riccardo Muti. Acts 1 and 2 8.20 Distant Verd. Daniel Snowman considers the changing styles of Verdi production 8.40 Macbeth, Acts 3 and 4

10.25 Spanish Love Songs, Robert Schumann's Spanish Lieders, featuring songs for vocal quartet performed by Eddwen Henry, soprano, Janet Baker, mezzo, David Llewellyn, tenor, Thomas Allen, baritone, Geoffrey Parsons and Christopher Middleton, piano

10.45 Night Watch, Link from New York. Highlights of the night's music, from 2.00 to 1.00, with work draws on the subterranean codes of American life. Plus Humphrey Carpenter and guests discuss Robert Rauschenberg's retrospective at the Guggenheim Museum

11.30 Composer of the Week: Goethe (f)

12.30am Jazz Notes, with Digby Fairweather. Includes the second part of the Fletcher Henderson retrospective

1.00 Through the Night, with Donald Macleod

RADIO 4

5.55am (LW) Shipping Forecast 6.00 News Briefing 6.10 Farming Today 6.25 Prayer for the Day 6.30 Today 8.40 Yesterday in Parliament 8.55 Weather 9.00 News 9.05 The Moral Maze, Michael Buerk chairs investigations into the moral questions behind the week's news

10.00 (FM) News, Radio Times Past. A light-hearted look at popular broadcasting, drawing on the BBC sound archives. Written by Mike Barfield (f)

10.00 (LW) Daily Service

10.15 (LW) On This Day, with Geoffrey Wheeler

10.30 Woman's Hour, introduced by Jenni Murray

11.30 From Our Correspondents. Dispatches from BBC reporters around the world

12.00 News: You and Yours, with Mark Whittaker

12.25pm Post Office. A new series in which guests attempt to solve a crime. With Simon Brett, Antonia Fraser and Anthony Price 12.55 Weather

1.00 The World at One, with Nick Clarke

1.40 The Archers (f) 1.55 Shipping Forecast

2.00 News; Thursday Afternoon Play: Clever as Paint, by Kim Morrissey. See Choice

3.00 News; Afternoon Shift, with Claire Brehan

4.00 News 4.05 Kaleidoscope, Paul Allen sees Jerry Agutter and Ian McKellen in the National Theatre's *Peter Pan* as it begins at the Oliver auditorium, plus a review of a new production of *The Government Inspector* at the Almeida Theatre in London

4.45 Short Story: The Story of the Goblins Who Stole a Sexton, by Charles Dickens, read by Clive Francis

5.00 PM, with Charlie Lee-Potter and Chris Lowe 5.55 Shipping Forecast 6.55 Weather

6.00 Six O'Clock News

6.30 Smooth Talkers. A new series of the panel game of improvisational wit and deceit

7.00 News 7.05 The Archers

7.20 Sons and Mothers, Nick Baker explores the relationship between feminist mothers and their sons (f)

8.00 Analysis: Tiger, Tiger, Burning Out? See Choice

8.45 Letter from Scotland, Alan Taylor considers the effects of devolution on the Scottish people

9.00 Does He Take Sugar? With Frederick Dove

9.20 Kaleidoscope (f) 9.50 Weather

10.00 The World Tonight, with Robin Lustig

10.45 Book at Bedtime: Special Terms, by Donald Frame. A tale set in 1950s Edinburgh (1/2)

11.00 Ray Bradbury's Tales of the Bizarre: And So Died Rimboudhinka. The tale of a strange relationship between a ventriloquist and his doll. With Liam Brennan, Vad Vysester and John Ramage (5/6)

11.30 (LW) Today in Parliament

11.30 (FM) Ulysse and Oly. Destinations. The historian and journalist Paul Johnson shares his vision of an ideal world with Michael O'Donnell (5/6) (f)

12.00 News 12.30am The Late Book, Conversations with My Agent, written by Rob Long, read by Rob Morrow (4/5)

12.45 Shipping Forecast 1.00 As World Service

FREQUENCY GUIDE. RADIO 1, FM 97.8-99.3. RADIO 2, FM 88.0-90.2. RADIO 3, FM 90.2-92.4. RADIO 4, FM 92.4-94.6. LW 198. MW 720. RADIO 5 LIVE, MW 638, 909. CLASSIC FM, FM 100-102. VIRGIN RADIO, FM 105.6; MW 1197, 1215. TALK RADIO, MW 1058, 1060. Television and radio listings compiled by Peter Dear, Ian Hughes, Rosemary Smith, Susan Thomson, Jane Gregory and John McNamee.

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RUGBY LEAGUE 42

Sheldon leads new challenge for Northern soul

SPORT

THURSDAY DECEMBER 18 1997

BOXING 46

Kelley stands between Hamed and an American dream

Spanish tests for Villa and Chelsea

United happy with royal appointment

BY OLIVER HOLT, FOOTBALL CORRESPONDENT

THEY have the backing of the royal family, a team that is on the brink of a French league record for excellence and a stadium fit for kings, but when the draw for the quarter-finals of the European Cup paired Manchester United with AS Monaco yesterday, Alex Ferguson and his players breathed a collective sigh of relief that they had not been matched with any of the true aristocracy of European football.

As Aston Villa swallowed hard after the news that they will have to overcome Atletico Madrid to reach the semi-finals of the Uefa Cup and Chelsea stayed steadfastly ambiguous about their meeting with Real Betis, of Seville, for a place in the last four of the Cup Winners' Cup, United went as far as any sensible club is prepared to go before a crucial match: they were cautiously optimistic.

Monaco are hardly likely to be whipping boys. They finished at the top of a modest group F in the Champions' League, ahead of Sporting Lisbon, Lierse and Bayer Leverkusen, who also qualified as one of the best runners-up. Just as important, though, they lead the French league and will equal a 13-year-old record if they win.

their eighth successive championship game in Metz tonight. Once the domain of Arsene Wenger, now the Arsenal coach, and his star pupil, Glenn Hoddle, Monaco's fortunes dipped when Wenger left. However, under the tutelage of Jean Tigana, the former France midfielder player, they are enjoying a renaissance. Last season, they knocked Newcastle United out of the Uefa Cup, dominated the domestic scene and won the title by 12 points from their nearest challengers.

Defensively, they are suspect and twice during the Champions' League, they

Lama target for West Ham

WEST Ham United will wait until the full extent of the next injury to Lukde Miklosko, the goalkeeper, is known before deciding whether to pursue an interest in Bernard Lama, who has played 35 games in goal for France. Miklosko could be ruled out for three months, but West Ham, who have made Craig Forrest, the Canada international, their No 1, will not be rushed into a signing, even though Lama, of Paris Saint-Germain, is desperate to find a club.

came back from two-goal deficits. Despite losing Sonny Anderson, the Brazilian forward, to Barcelona last summer, attacking remains their forte. In Thierry Henry, they have a precocious forward who is at the top of the competition's scoring list with six goals, one in front of Andy Cole. John Collins, the former Celtic player, is an integral part of their midfield.

Alex Ferguson, at home yesterday suffering from flu, said United had already taken the precaution of having Monaco watched. He gave them due respect, but admitted he felt relieved United were not involved in a tie as tough as that between Dynamo Kiev and Juventus or Bayern Munich and Borussia Dortmund. He was happy, too, that United would play the first leg in the magnificent Stade Louis II in Monaco on March 4, with the return at Old Trafford a fortnight later.

"We have already had Monaco watched a couple of times," Ferguson said. "It was important that we knew something about the teams we could meet later in the competition. It is a decent draw for us. The obvious thing we would want is to play away first and we have got that."

"You have to respect a team that won its domestic league so crushing last season and there is no easy draw at this stage of the competition, but I admit there are a couple of tough ties out there. I'm thinking, in particular, of the Dynamo-Kiev-Juventus one."

If United could afford to look ahead, Brian Little, the Villa manager, was not allowing himself that luxury. His obdurate side has already confounded the sceptics by outlasting Bordeaux, Steaua Bucharest and another Spanish side, Athletic Bilbao, but this match, against the conquerors of Leicester City, will be their toughest test so far.

Atletico Madrid, still labouring in the giant shadows cast by Barcelona and Real Madrid, put nine goals past the PAOK Salonika side that eliminated Arsenal from the competition. Formidable in attack, they have players such as Christian Vieri, the Italy forward, and the prodigiously gifted Juninho. "We know it will be an extremely tough game," Little said. "They were one of the favourites from the beginning of the competition and we will have a healthy respect for them."

Like Ferguson, though, Little drew solace from the fact that Villa had been drawn away first. The same happy fate befell Chelsea. Betis are one of the better teams left in a competition that has been devalued by the Champions' League decision to take the top two teams from the championships of leading countries.

Betis, whose leading player



Ferguson: content

is their forward, Alfonso, who nearly joined Barcelona for £25 million last season, beamed their misfortune in drawing Chelsea. There is a faint possibility that their own world record signing, Denilson, whom they priced away from São Paulo in Brazil for £21.5 million, may be available, but it is unlikely.

They do have Finidi George, the Nigeria World Cup player, and Robert Jarni, the Croatia wing back, but were crestfallen about the draw. "They are the one team we did not want to play," a club spokesman said.



Seizinger looks totally focused as she sweeps downhill at Val d'Isere on her way to her fifth victory of the season in a speed event

Seizinger stretches her lead downhill

BY OUR SPORTS STAFF

KATJA SEIZINGER confirmed that she was in a class of her own when she won a women's downhill at Val d'Isere, France, yesterday — her fifth consecutive victory in a speed event this season. The 25-year-old German trailed Ingeborg Marken, of Norway, by 0.02sec after the first leg, but was unbeatable in the second.

With a combined time of 2min 1.82sec, Seizinger, the leader in the World Cup competition, beat Hilde Gerg, her compatriot, by 0.49sec. Marken finished in third place, her best in a downhill,

0.62sec behind the winner. Seizinger, the Olympic downhill champion, has won every speed event so far this season, building up an impressive lead in the World Cup standings. Seizinger has 643 points, 214 more than Gerg, in second place on 429.

"I prefer to concentrate on each race and see what happens," Seizinger said. "I can't really say where all this is leading to. Today I also had a lot of luck, the race was surely not the most fair."

Seizinger said she takes

fewer risks than other competitors. "I ski by instinct," she said. "My coaches say I can go faster, I am not doing 100 per cent. It's not intentional."

Her rivals would not have been encouraged to hear her add: "I abhor this type of race. I prefer the downhill from top to bottom. Here the bottom is pretty easy and you have to do the same elements twice."

The German has a chance to leave her rivals further behind today in the third super-giant slalom of the

season. Her win yesterday, in the third downhill of the season, was her fifteenth in a downhill and the 33rd in her career, making her the third-most successful skier, with Hanni Wenzel, of Lichtenstein.

The race was held in two legs on a shortened Oreiller-Killy piste after strong winds twice halted the morning run. Poor weather has hampered the start of the European season. Two women's events were postponed here last week and the races due to

take place this week in the Swiss resort of Veysonnaz were moved to Val d'Isere. The downhill yesterday marked the return to World Cup action of Seizinger's main rivals of the past two seasons, Picabo Street, of the United States, and Pernilla Wiberg, of Sweden.

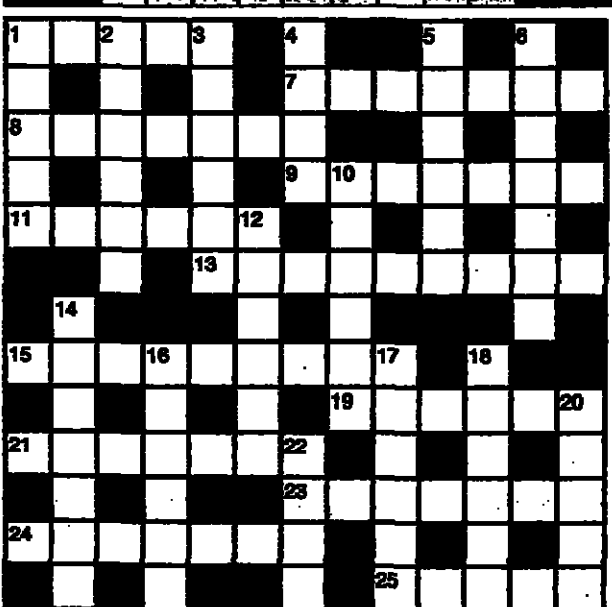
Street, who suffered a serious knee injury a year ago, finished in a promising tenth place on 2min 3.85sec, but Wiberg, the World Cup titleholder, who hurt her knee in training before the start of the season, finished out of the placings.

| EUROPEAN CUP | | CUP WINNERS' CUP | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| Bayer Leverkusen v Real Madrid | Ajax v Spartak Moscow | Roda JC Kerkrade v Vicoenza | |
| Juventus v Dynamo Kiev | Internazionale v Schalke 04 | Slavia Prague v VSB Sturgart | |
| Bayern Munich v Borussia Dortmund | Lazio v Auxerre | AEK Athens v Lokomotiv Moscow | |
| AS Monaco v Manchester United | Atletico Madrid v Aston Villa | Real Betis v Chelsea | |

First leg: March 4 First leg: March 3 First leg: March 5
Second leg: March 18 Second leg: March 17 Second leg: March 19

First round: March 18 Second round: March 17 Third round: March 19

TIMES TWO CROSSWORD



No 1280

ACROSS

- 1 Suddenly appear (3,2): book for infants (3-2)
- 7 Skilled worker (once) (7)
- 8 Doughty (7)
- 9 Popeye's magic veg (7)
- 11 Path out of one's way (6)
- 13 (Violin) plucked (9)
- 15 A reptile: file of children (9)
- 19 Friedrich —, worked with Marx (6)
- 21 Morning prayer (7)
- 23 One running and jumping (7)
- 24 One with black/white parents (7)
- 25 Invigorate (3,2)

DOWN

- 1 Laid with stones (5)

SOLUTION TO NO 1279

- ACROSS: 1 Dove-tail 5 Swap 9 Fall into place 10 Pang
11 Nineveh 13 Lustre 15 Kaiser 18 Picasso 20 Cool
23 Heister-skelter 24 Dirk 25 Criteria

- DOWN: 1 Daft 2 Volga 3 Trigger 4 Intone 6 Wharves
7 Plethora 8 Span 12 Slipshod 14 Secular 16 Ancient
17 Mouser 19 Shew 21 Otter 22 Aria

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